When husbands come home
How to guard against *colds* and *sore throat*

CHILDREN at school run considerable risk of infection, but it is as nothing compared to that encountered by every husband.

Twice a day he rides in badly ventilated cars, crowded with coughers—*germs there*.

All morning he works in an overheated office, rushes out into the cold to a restaurant filled with people suffering from colds, sore throat or worse—*germs there*.

All day he talks over telephones that others with nose or throat infections have used—*germs there*.

In view of the facts, is it surprising that so many men are ill half the time with colds, sore throat and similar infections?

Can you doubt the wisdom of gargling with full strength Listerine not only on arising and before retiring, but on returning from work?

For, as you know, full strength Listerine, though safe and harmless to use, combats infection and is fatal to germs that cause it.

Laboratory tests show that it kills even such stubborn disease-producing organisms as the Staphylococcus Aureus (pus) and Bacillus Typhosus (typhoid) in counts ranging to 200,000,000, in 15 seconds. We could not make this statement unless we were prepared to prove it to the entire satisfaction of the medical profession and the U. S. Government.

During winter weather see that all members of your family gargle frequently with Listerine. It may be the means of sparing them a dangerous siege of illness. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

Gargle, with LISTERINE The Safe Antiseptic

Kills 200,000,000 *germs in* 15 *seconds*

"Raised His Pay $4800 After Reading This Amazing Book Which Is Now *FREE!*

* Based on the combined experiences of **F. B.** Englehardt, Chattanooga, Tenn.; A. P. Thompson, Sioux City, Iowa; L. D. Mathers, of E. Cleveland, Ohio, and many others.

Caught in a Rut

I wonder I put up with it as long as I did! Every day was filled with nothing but deadly routine and monotonous detail. No freedom or independence. No chance to get out and meet people, travel, nor have interesting experiences. I was just like a cog in a big machine with poor prospects of ever being anything more.

Long, Tiresome Hours

Every hour of the day I was under somebody's supervision. The TIME-CLOCK constantly laid in wait for me—a monument to unfulfilled hopes and dying ambition. Four times a day, promptly on the dot, it hurled its silent challenge at my self-respect, reminding me how unimportant I was and how little I really COUNTED in the business and social world!

Low Pay

Paid just enough to keep going—but never enough to enjoy any of the GOOD things of life every man DESERVES for his family and himself. Always economizing and pinching pennies. Always wondering what I would do if I were laid off or lost my job. Always uncertain and apprehensive of the future.

Desperate

Happened to get a look at the payroll one day and was astonished to see what big salaries went to the sales force. Found that salesman Brown made $300 a week—and Jenkins $3751 Would have given my right arm to make money that fast, but never dreamed I had any "gift" for salesmanship.

A Ray of Light

Stumbled across an article on salesmanship in a magazine that evening. Was surprised to discover that salesmen were made and not "born" as I had foolishly believed. Read about a former cowpuncher, Wm. Shore of California, making $525 in one week after learning the ins-and-outs of scientific salesmanship. Decided that if HE could do it, so could I!

The Turning Point

My first step was to write for a certain little book which a famous business genius has called "The MOST AMAZING BOOK EVER PRINTED". It wasn't a very *big* book, but it certainly opened my eyes to things I had never *dreamed* of—and proved the turning point of my entire career!

What I Discovered

Between the pages of this remarkable volume, I discovered hundreds of little known facts and secrets that revealed the REAL TRUTH about the science of selling! It wasn't a bit as I had imagined. I found out that it was governed by simple rules and laws that almost ANY man can master as easily as he learned the alphabet. I even learned how to go about getting into this "highest paid of all professions". I found out exactly how Mark Barchievich of San Francisco* was enabled to quit his $8 a week job as a restaurant-worker and start making $125 a week as a salesman; and how C. W. Birmingham of Dayton, Ohio, jumped from $15 a week to $7500 a year—these and *hundreds* of others! It certainly was a revelation!

FREE Employment Service

Furthermore, I discovered that the National Salesmen's Training Association, which published the book, also operates a most effective employment service! Last year they received requests from all over the U. S. and Canada for more than 50,000 salesmen trained by their method. This service is FREE to both members and employers and thousands have secured positions this way!

Making Good At Last!

It didn't take me long to decide to cast my lot with N. S. T. A.—and after a few weeks I had mastered the secrets of Modern Salesmanship during spare time, without losing a day or a dollar from my old job. When I was ready, the Employment Manager found me over a dozen good openings to choose from—and I selected one which paid me over $70 a week to start!

Was It Worth It?

Today my salary is $4800 greater than ever before! No more punching time-clocks or worrying over dimes and quarters! NOW my services are in REAL DEMAND with bigger prospects for the future than I ever dared HOPE for back in those days when I was just another "name" on a pay-roll!

Get Your Copy FREE

Right now the book—"The Key to Master Salesmanship"—which banished all my fears and troubles and showed me how to get started on the road to success and independence—will be mailed as a gift to any ambitious man, absolutely FREE. And since there is no obligation, why not see for yourself what amazing facts it contains! Just mail the coupon now for there is no better way in the world to invest a 2-cent stamp! I KNOW!

National Salesmen's Training Assn., Dept. C-792, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Without obligation, please send me a free copy of "The Key to Master Salesmanship." Also include full details of your training and Free Employment Service.

Name_____ Address_____

Town_____ State_____

Age_____ Occupation_____

20c ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER-SCIENCE

On Sale the First Thursday of Each Month

W. M. CLAYTON, Publisher HARRY BATES, Editor DOUGLAS M. DOLD, Consulting Editor

The Clayton Standard on a Magazine Guarantees:

That the stories therein are clean, interesting, vivid; by leading writers of the day and purchased under conditions approved by the Authors' League of America;
That such magazines are manufactured in Union shops by American workmen;
That each newsdealer and agent is insured a fair profit;
That an intelligent censorship guards their advertising pages.

The other Clayton magazines are:

ACE-HIGH MAGAZINE, RANCH ROMANCES, COWBOY STORIES, CLUES, FIVE-NOVELS MONTHLY, WIDE WORLD ADVENTURES, ALL STAR DETECTIVE STORIES, FLYERS, RANGELAND LOVE STORY MAGAZINE, SKY-HIGH LIBRARY MAGAZINE, WESTERN ADVENTURES, MISS 1930, *and* FOREST AND STREAM

More, Than Two Million Copies Required to Supply the Monthly Demand for Clayton Magazines.

VOL. I, No. 3

CONTENTS

MARCH, 1930

COVER DESIGN — H. W. WESSOLOWSKI

Painted in Water-colors from a Scene in "Brigands of the Moon."

COLD LIGHT — CAPTAIN S. P. MEEK — 295

How Could a Human Body Be Found Actually Splintered + Broken into Sharp Fragments Like a Shattered Glass! Once Again Dr. Bird Probes Deep into an Amazing Mystery.

BRIGANDS OF THE MOON — RAY CUMMINGS — 306

Black Mutiny and Brigandage Stalk the Space-ship Planetara as She Speeds to the Moon to Pick Up a Fabulously Rich Cache of Radium-ore.

THE SOUL MASTER — WILL SMITH AND R. J. ROBBINS — 350

Desperately O'Hara Plunged into Prof. Keil's Mysterious Mansion. For His Friend Ship Was the Victim of the Eccentric Scientist's De-astralizing Experiment, and Faced a Fate More Hideous than Death.

FROM THE OCEAN'S DEPTHS — SEWELL PEASLEE WRIGHT — 376

Man Came from the Sea. Mercer, by His Thought-telegraph, Learns from the Weirdly Beautiful Ocean-maiden of a Branch that Returned There.

VANDALS OF THE STARS — A. T. LOCKE — 390

A Livid Flame Flares Across Space—and Over Manhattan Hovers Tesnical, Vassal of Malfero, Lord of the Universe, Who Comes with Ten Thousand Warriors to Ravage and Subjugate One More Planet for His Master.

Single Copies, 20 Cents (In Canada, 25 Cents) Yearly Subscription, $2.00

Issued monthly by Publishers' Fiscal Corporation, 80 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y. W. M. Clayton, President; Nathan Goldmann, Secretary. Application for entry as second-class mail pending at the Post Office at New York, under Act of March 3, 1879. Application for registration of title as Trade Mark pending in the U. S. Patent Office. Member Newsstand Group—Men's List. For advertising rates address E. E. Crowe & Co., Inc., 25 Vanderbilt Ave., New York; or 225 North Michigan Ave., Chicago.

No alibis *now* for not learning to play!

Easy as A-B-C to become a popular musician on any instrument this "no teacher" way

WHY let your imagination run loose and keep you from becoming a popular musician? Haven't you heard that there a way of learning to play your favorite instrument in a few short months? Without taking lessons from a teacher! Without paying expensive fees! Without any tiresome technique or dry-as-dust exercises to struggle through—a way that has been vouched for by over half-million people in all parts of the world.

The U. S. School of Music has completely removed all the difficulty, boredom and extravagance from music lessons. It has made the reading and playing of music so downright simple that you don't have to know one note from another to begin.

It's So Easy!

Your own home is your studio. The lessons come to you by mail. They consist of complete printed instructions, diagrams, and all music you need.

You study with a smile. For instead of just scales you learn to play real tunes from actual notes right from the very first lesson on. And you're never in hot water. First you are told how a thing is done, then a picture shows you how, then you do it yourself and hear it. No private teacher could make it clearer or easier.

"Goodbye Blues"

Sooner than you realize you will be bringing cheer to the folks at home with your playing. Gradually you gain confidence and professional expression. Then parties, popularity, orchestra work follow in short order. You'll know how good it feels to be out of the wall-flower class and into the whirl of things . . . to be able to provide musical enjoyment for others whenever you are called upon.

The abundance of joys that music can bring into anyone's life is now yours to share. Let the time-proven and tested U. S. School home-study method help you to increased pleasure and financial gain. Bear in mind no matter which instrument you select—the cost of learning in each case will average the same—*just a few cents a day!*

Pick Your Instrument

Piano	Violin
Organ	Clarinet
Ukulele	Flute
Cornet	Saxophone
Trombone	Harp
Piccolo	Mandolin
Guitar	Cello

Hawaiian Steel Guitar
Sight Singing
Piano Accordion
Italian and German Accordion
Voice and Speech Culture
Harmony and Composition
Drums and Traps
Automatic Finger Control
Banjo (Plectrum, 5-String or Tenor)

Free Book and Demonstration Lesson

Our wonderful illustrated Free Book and our Free Demonstration Lesson explain all about this remarkable method. They prove just how anyone can learn to play his favorite instrument in half the time and for just a fraction of what old slow methods cost. The booklet will also tell you all about the amazing new *Automatic Finger Control.*

If you really want to learn to play—if new friends, good times, social popularity, and increased income appeal to you—take this opportunity to make your dreams come true. Now! Sign the coupon and send it before it's too late. Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. **U. S. School of Music, 3693 Brunswick Building, New York City.**

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC
3693 Brunswick Bldg., New York City

Please send me your free book, "Music Lessons in Your Own Home," with introduction by Dr. Frank Crane, Free Demonstration Lesson, and particulars of your easy payment plan. I am interested in the following course:

Have You Had Instrument?

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Are you afraid you will be fired?

ARE you sitting on the anxious bench wondering what will happen to you if business slacks up? Are you one of the many small-salaried, untrained workers who are always the first to go when employers start cutting the salary list?

Why have this spectre of unemployment hanging over you all the time? Why not decide today that you are going to make yourself so valuable to your employer that he can't get along without you?

You can do it if you really want to, right at home in spare time, through the International Correspondence Schools. In just an hour a day you can get the special training that you must have if you are ever going to get—*and keep*—a real job.

You're ambitious, aren't you? And you want to get ahead? Then don't turn this page until you have clipped the coupon, marked the line of work you like, and mailed it to Scranton for full particulars.

Surely it is worth at least a two-cent stamp to find out all about the I. C. S. and what it can do for you.

Mail the Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2126-E, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X in the list below:

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- ☐ Architect
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Building Foreman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Structural Draftsman
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ Electrical Engineer
- ☐ Electrical Contractor
- ☐ Electric Wiring
- ☐ Electric Lighting
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Telegraph Engineer
- ☐ Telephone Work
- ☐ Mechanical Engineer
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Toolmaker
- ☐ Patternmaker
- ☐ Civil Engineer
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Bridge Engineer
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ Automobile Mechanic
- ☐ Aviation Engines
- ☐ Plumber and Steam Fitter
- ☐ Plumbing Inspector
- ☐ Foreman Plumber
- ☐ Heating and Ventilation
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Worker
- ☐ Steam Engineer
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ Refrigeration Engineer
- ☐ R. R. Positions
- ☐ Highway Engineer
- ☐ Chemistry
- ☐ Pharmacy
- ☐ Coal Mining Engineer
- ☐ Navigation ☐ Assayer
- ☐ Iron and Steel Worker
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
- ☐ Cotton Manufacturing
- ☐ Woolen Manufacturing
- ☐ Agriculture ☐ Fruit Growing
- ☐ Poultry Farming
- ☐ Mathematics ☐ Radio

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Personnel Management
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Accounting and C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Cost Accounting
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Secretarial Work
- ☐ Spanish ☐ French
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering
- ☐ Stenography and Typing
- ☐ English
- ☐ Civil Service
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ Mail Carrier
- ☐ Grade School Subjects
- ☐ High School Subjects
- ☐ Cartooning
- ☐ Illustrating
- ☐ Lumber Dealer

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Occupation .....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Get Strong WITH These Improved Muscle Builders All for $5.00

Why pay an extravagant price for strength—here's an opportunity to get all the equipment you require with an excellent course of instruction for only $5.00. Realize your ambition and develop muscles of a super-man. Get strong and amaze your friends. We show you how to easily master feats which now seem difficult—or if you just want physical culture for your health's sake, this equipment is just what you need. With this special offer you save at least $20.00. We furnish ten cable chest expanders which is adjustable to give resistance up to 350 lbs. It is made of new live rubber strength, springy rubber so as to assure long wear and give the resistance you need for real muscle development. You also get a pair of patented hand grips for developing powerful grip and forearms.

We include wall exercising apparatus which permit you to develop your back, arms and legs—a real muscle necessity, as you know that business men and athletes, too, often show their age in their legs. Develop your leg muscles with the foot straps which we furnish. This will give you speed and endurance that isn't all that you get. In addition we furnish a specially written course which contains pictures and diagrams showing you how to develop any part of your body so that you will not only get on with these exercises and gain the power and advantage from their use. And now a few can get in on this special offer. It must be withdrawn, so rush the coupon.

SEND NO MONEY

All of the items pictured on this page are included in this big special reduction offer. Write your name and address to the coupon below and rush it to us. We will send your complete outfit, developer, the wall charts, pair of hand grips, foot straps and the course by return mail. Pay the postman only $5.00 plus the few cents postage on arrival. (If you desire to save postage send check or money order in advance, we pay postage.)

GUARANTEE

All Crusader products are guaranteed to give entire satisfaction or money back.

CRUSADER APPARATUS CO.,
Dept. 2003, 44 Parker Ave., Maplewood, N. J.

I accept your offer. Send me everything described in your advertisement by return mail. I will pay postman $5.00 plus charges on arrival. It is understood if I am not entirely satisfied after examination I can return the goods and you will refund my money.

Note:—No C. O. D. Orders to Foreign Countries or Canada.

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State .....

Easy to Get into this BIG Money Making Work
$60 to $125.00 A WEEK
Radio Operator
$8 to $15.00 A DAY
Servicing and Repairing Radio Sets
$5000.00 A YEAR AND UP
Radio Engineer for Broadcasting Station
$85.00 A WEEK
Installing and Repairing Talking Picture Equipment

GOOD JOBS *Right at Your Finger Tips*

WHEN YOU ARE R.T.I. TRAINED IN

RADIO-TELEVISION - *Talking Pictures*

Big Pay Jobs! Spare Time Profits! A Fine Business of Your Own! They're all open to you and other live wire men who answer the call of Radio. The fastest growing industry in the world needs more trained men. And now come Television and Talking Movies—the magic sisters of Radio. Will you answer this call? Will you get ready for a big pay job Now and step into a Bigger One later on? You can do it Easily now.

FRED R. GOSNELL
Chief of R. T. I. Staff
Twenty years of Radio experience. Pioneer in public two-way police radio systems. Designer of Traffic Signaling Systems. Radio Editor, U. S. Government Publications. Author of R. T. I. Courses. Member Institute of Radio Engineers. Past President of Radio Society of Washington. Formerly of R. T. I. Now in charge of R. T. I. Training. Will help you win the big success in Radio you've dreamed of. Let him help you realize your ambition.

R. T. I. Home Training Puts You in This Big Money Field

Radio alone, pays over 200 Million Dollars a year in wages in Broadcasting, Manufacturing, Sales, Service, Commercial Stations and on Board the big sea going ships and many more men are needed. Television and Talking Movies open up other vast fields of money-making opportunities for ambitious men. Get into this great business that is live, new and up-to-date, where thousands of trained men easily earn $60 to $100 a week—where $10,000 a year jobs are plentiful for men with training plus experience.

Easy To Learn At Home—In Spare Time

Learning Radio the R. T. I. way with F. H. Dobell, the "Ace of Radio" behind you is Easy, Interesting, really Fun. Only a few spare hours are needed and lack of education or experience won't bother you a bit. We furnish all necessary testing and working apparatus and start you off on practical work you'll enjoy—you learn to do the jobs that pay real money and which are going begging now for want of competent men to fill them.

Amazingly Quick Results

You want to earn Big Money, and you want some of it Quick. R. T. I. "Three In One" Home Training—Radio-Television-Talking Movies—will give it to you, because it's easy, practical, and is kept right up-to-date with last minute information. In a few weeks you can be doing actual Radio work, making enough Extra Money to more than pay for your training. In a few short months you can be all through—ready to step into a good paying job or start a business of your own. A Big Job—Big Money—A Big Future. There is no other business in the world like it.

Investigate—Send For R. T. I. Book Now

Don't waste a minute. Find out what the great Radio industry, which has grown faster than the Automobile and Motion Picture business, has to offer you. Find out what other men are earning. See How Easily You Can Get Started. Get the facts about Radio, Television and the Talking Pictures, first hand, in the big R. T. I. Free Book. Learn what this R. T. I. "Three in One" Home Training can do for you. Mail the coupon for Free Book Now.

RADIO & TELEVISION INSTITUTE
Dept. 143-153
4806 St. Anthony Court, Chicago

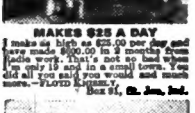
R.T.I. *Training Brings Big Jobs Like These!*

$500 EXTRA MONEY IN 2 MONTHS

Your radio course has enabled me to earn over $500 in two months. This is all spare time work, as I have a permanent position with my father in our store. I give you all the credit for the above. —J. Hoffmeyer, R. I. Box 87, Greenville, Ky.

MAKES $25 A DAY

I make as high as $25.00 per day and have made $500.00 in 2 months from radio work. That's not so bad when I'm only 19 and in a small town. You did all you said you would and much more.—Floyd Kaiser, Box 84, St. Jos. Ind.



SALARY RAISED 331-3%

I am now Radio Service Manager for the H. W. (Kaltz) Supply Co., distributors for Everready Radio Receivers in Oklahoma, and Texas Panhandle, with an increase in salary of about 331-3% since I enrolled with your Institute. —Earl F. Gordon, 618 W. 16th St. Oklahoma City, Okla.

RADIO & TELEVISION INSTITUTE
Dept. 143-153, 4806 St. Anthony Ct., Chicago

Send me Free and prepaid your BIG BOOK "Tune In On Big Pay" and full details of your three-in-one Home Training (without obligating me in any way).

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Most Amazing Insurance Offer Ever Made to Anyone Before!

Now you need not fear the future! You need not fear that common enemy—SICKNESS, nor the ever-present danger of ACCIDENT—for now practically *anyone who can spare 3 cents a day* can take advantage of this almost unbelievable offer of America's Oldest and Largest Exclusive Health and Accident Insurance Company.

Let Us Send This Offer

No matter how much insurance you have now—you cannot honestly afford to pass this opportunity. The North American Accident Insurance Company is making this unheard of bargain proposition to gain the acquaintance of many more thousands of satisfied policyholders. It already serves more policyholders than any other exclusive health and accident company in America. Therefore this advertisement is addressed to every man and woman between 16 and 70 years of age.

10 Days FREE Protection

No Red tape—No obligation to buy anything

Immediately upon receipt of coupon at bottom of this page, this company will send all information, details, and APPLICATION BLANK. When you receive this clear-cut, liberal-coverage policy, keep it for 10 days, examine it, compare it, put it to any test—*and during this time you are fully protected* according to the terms of this liberal policy, and backed by this company's record of 43 years of successful operation. If you feel you can afford to return the policy it will not cost you one cent. It will have been *absolutely Free.* This is the same policy that is to-day protecting thousands upon thousands of men and women in every walk of life throughout America. There is no red tape or "catch" in this proposition. It is simply a bona fide offer made possible only by this company's widespread distribution of its policies.

MAIL *the* COUPON NOW
SEND NO MONEY

Don't wait until this offer expires, or even too late for insurance. No matter who you are or where you are—this world-famous policy covering accidental death, many common sicknesses, many common and unusual accidents, in the home, on street or sidewalk, including automobile accidents—you will certainly say that this policy seems to be made for you personally. And then remember this policy is guaranteed by a fund of millions of dollars for the exclusive protection of policyholders. One week's benefit is far more than the cost to carry this policy a whole year. This coupon will bring full details of this extraordinary offer to you—*but you must do it Now!* Don't wait for trouble to overtake you before you are protected.

Beware of Imitations!

The North American Accident Insurance Company, the oldest and largest exclusive health and accident company, stands *unconditionally* behind this easily-understandable, world-famous policy. You know exactly what every word means—every word means what it says.

Under Supervision of All State Insurance Departments

AGENTS WANTED FOR LOCAL TERRITORY

Entire Cost $10. Year

Cash Benefits up to

$10,000

$10,000
Loss of Hands, Feet or Eyesight

$25 WEEKLY BENEFIT
For Stated Sicknesses

$25 WEEKLY BENEFIT
For Stated Accidents

Special
Automobile Clause

Unusual Clause covers accidental loss of life from any cause, at any time, anywhere.

Hospital Benefit—Doctors' Fee Benefit. Many other benefits to help you in time of need.

No Physical Examination

Anyone 16 to 70 years accepted

Policy in Full Force for ENTIRE YEAR

No Dues — No Assessments

MAIL COUPON TO-DAY

NORTH AMERICAN ACCIDENT INSURANCE CO.
401 Wallach Bldg., Newark, New Jersey.

Gentlemen:

Please send me all details of the "most amazing insurance offer ever made to anyone before." It is understood I am not obligated to buy anything.

Name

Address

City and State.....

"The bodies had broken into pieces, as though they had been made of glass."

Cold Light

By Capt. S. P. Meek

"CONFOUND it, Carnes, I am on my vacation!"

"I know it, Doctor, and I hate to disturb you, but I felt that I simply had to. I have one of the weirdest cases on my hands that I have ever been mixed up in and I think that you'll forgive me for calling you when I tell you about it."

How could a human body be found actually splintered—broken into sharp fragments like a shattered glass! Once again Dr. Bird probes deep into an amazing mystery.

Dr. Bird groaned into the telephone transmitter.

"I took a vacation last summer, or tried to, and you hauled me away from the best fishing I have found in years to help you on a case. This year I traveled all the way from Washington to San Francisco to get away from you and the very day that I get here you are after me. I won't have anything to do with it. Where are you, anyway?"

"I am at Fallon, Nevada, Doctor. I'm sorry that you won't help me out because the case promises to be unusually interesting. Let me at least tell you about it."

Dr. Bird groaned louder than ever into the telephone transmitter.

"All right, go ahead and tell me about it if it will relieve your mind, but I have given you my final answer. I am not a bit interested in it."

"That is quite all right, Doctor, I

don't expect you to touch it. I hope, however, that you will be able to give me an idea of where to start. Did you ever see a man's body broken in pieces?"

"Do you mean badly smashed up?"

"No indeed, I mean just what I said, broken in pieces. Legs snapped off as though the entire flesh had become brittle."

"No, I didn't, and neither did anyone else."

"I have seen it, Doctor."

"Hooey! What had you been drinking?"

Operative Carnes of the United States Secret Service chuckled softly to himself. The voice of the famous scientist of the Bureau of Standards plainly showed an interest which was quite at variance with his words.

"I was quite sober, Doctor, and so was Hughes, and we both saw it."

"Who is Hughes?"

"He is an air mail pilot, one of the crack fliers of the Transcontinental Airmail Corporation. Let me tell you the whole thing in order."

"All right, I have a few minutes to spare, but I'll warn you again that I don't intend to touch the case."

"SUIT yourself, Doctor, I have no authority to requisition your services. As you know, the T. A. C. has been handling a great deal of the transcontinental air mail with a pretty clean record on accidents. The day before yesterday, a special plane left Washington to carry two packages from there to San Francisco. One of them was a shipment of jewels valued at a quarter of a million, consigned to a San Francisco firm and the other was a sealed packet from the War Department. No one was supposed to know the contents of that packet except the Chief of Staff who delivered it to the plane personally, but rumors got out, as usual, and it was popularly supposed to contain certain essential features of the Army's war plans. This much is certain: The plane carried not only the regular T. A. C. pilot and courier, but also an army courier, and it was guarded during the trip by an army plane armed with small bombs and a machine-gun. I rode in it. My orders were simply to guard the ship until it landed at Mills Field and then to guard the courier from there to the Presidio of San Francisco until his packet was delivered personally into the hands of the Commanding General of the Ninth Corps Area.

"The trip was quiet and monotonous until after we left Salt Lake City at dawn this morning. Nothing happened until we were about a hundred miles east of Reno. We had taken elevation to cross the Stillwater Mountains and were skimming low over them, my plane trailing the T. A. C. plane by about half a mile. I was not paying any particular attention to the other ship when I suddenly felt our plane leap ahead. It was a fast Douglas and the pilot gave it the gun and made it move, I can tell you. I yelled into the speaking tube and asked what was the reason. My pilot yelled back that the plane ahead was in trouble.

"As soon as it was called to my attention I could see myself that it wasn't acting normally. It was losing elevation and was pursuing a very erratic course. Before we could reach it it lost flying speed and fell into a spinning nose dive and headed for the ground. I watched, expecting every minute to see the crew make parachute jumps, but they didn't and the plane hit the ground with a terrific crash."

"It caught fire, of course?"

"NO, Doctor, that is one of the funny things about the accident. It didn't. It hit the ground in an open place free from brush and literally burst into pieces, but it didn't flame up. We headed directly for the scene of the crash and we encountered another funny thing. We almost froze to death."

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say. Of course, it's

pretty cold at that altitude all the time, but this cold was like nothing I had ever encountered. It seemed to freeze the blood in our veins and it congealed frost on the windshields and made the motor miss for a moment. It was only momentary and it only existed directly over the wrecked plane. We went past it and swung around in a circle and came back over the wreck, but we didn't feel the cold again.

"The next thing we tried to do was to find a landing place. That country is pretty rugged and rough and there wasn't a flat place for miles that was large enough to land a ship on. Hughes and I talked it over and there didn't seem to be much of anything that we could do except to go on until we found a landing place. I had had no experience in parachute jumping and I couldn't pilot the plane if Hughes jumped. We swooped down over the wreck as close as we dared and that was when we saw the condition of the bodies. The whole plane was cracked up pretty badly, but the weird part of it was the fact that the bodies of the crew had broken into pieces, as though they had been made of glass. Arms and legs were detached from the torsos and lying at a distance. There was no sign of blood on the ground. We saw all this with our naked eyes from close at hand and verified it by observations through binoculars from a greater height.

"When we had made our observations and marked the location of the wreck as closely as we could, we headed east until we found a landing place near Fallon. Hughes dropped me here and went on to Reno, or to San Francisco if necessary, to report the accident and get more planes to aid in the search. I was wholly at sea, but it seemed to be in your line and as I knew that you were at the St. Francis, I called you up."

"WHAT are your plans?"

"I made none until I talked with you. The country where the wreck occurred is unbelievably wild and we can't get near it with any transportation other than burros. The only thing that I can see to do is to gather together what transportation I can and head for the wreck on foot to rescue the packets and to bring out the bodies. Can you suggest anything better?"

"When do you expect to start?"

"As soon as I can get my pack train together. Possibly in three or four hours."

"Carnes, are you sure that those bodies were broken into bits? An arm or a leg might easily be torn off in a complete crash."

"They were smashed into bits as nearly as I could tell, Doctor. Hughes is an old flier and he has seen plenty of crashes but he never saw anything like this. It beats anything that I ever saw."

"If your observations were accurate, there could be only one cause and that one is a patent impossibility. I haven't a bit of equipment here, but I expect that I can get most of the stuff I want from the University of California across the bay at Berkeley. I can get a plane at Crissy Field. I'll tell you what to do, Carnes. Get your burro train together and start as soon as you can, but leave me half a dozen burros and a guide at Fallon. I'll get up there as soon as I can find I'll try to overtake you before you get to the wreck. If I don't, don't disturb anything any more than you can help until my arrival. Do you understand?"

"I thought that you were on your vacation, Doctor."

"Oh shut up! Like most of my vacations, this one will have to be postponed. I'll move as swiftly as I can and I ought to be at Fallon to-night if I'm lucky and don't run into any obstacles. Burros are fairly slow, but I'll make the best time possible."

"I rather expected you would, Doctor. I can't get my pack train together until evening, so I'll wait for you right here. I'm mighty glad that you are going to get in on it."

SILENTLY Carnes and Dr. Bird surveyed the wreck of the T.A.C. plane. The observations of the secret service operative had been correct. The bodies of the unfortunate crew had been broken into fragments. The limbs had not been twisted off as a freak of the fall but had been cleanly broken off, as though the bodies had suddenly become brittle and had shattered on their impact with the ground. Not only the bodies, but the ship itself had been broken up. Even the clothing of the men was in pieces or had long splits in the fabric whose edges were as clean as though they had been cut with a knife.

Dr. Bird picked up an arm which had belonged to the pilot and examined it. The brittleness, if it had ever existed, was gone and the arm was limp.

"No *rigor mortis*," commented the Doctor. "How long ago was the wreck?"

"About seventy-two hours ago."

"Hm-m! What about those packets that were on the plane?"

Carnes stepped forward and gingerly inspected first the body of the army courier and then that of the courier of the T.A.C.

"Both gone, Doctor," he reported, straightening up.

Dr. Bird's face fell into grim lines.

"There is more to this case than appears on the surface, Carnes," he said. "This was no ordinary wreck. Bring up that third burro; I want to examine these fragments a little. Bill," he went on to one of the two guides who had accompanied them from Fallon, "you and Walter scout around the ground and see what you can find out. I especially wish to know whether anyone has visited the scene of the work."

THE guides consulted a moment and started out. Carnes drove up the burro the Doctor had indicated and Dr. Bird unpacked it. He opened a mahogany case and took from it a high powered microscope. Setting the instrument up on a convenient rock, he subjected portions of the wreck, including several fragments of flesh, to a careful scrutiny. When he had completed his observations he fell into a brown study, from which he was aroused by Carnes.

"What did you find out about the cause of the wreck, Doctor?"

"I don't know what to think. The immediate cause was that everything was frozen. The plane ran into a belt of cold which froze up the motor and which probably killed the crew instantly. It was undoubtedly the aftermath of that cold which you felt when you swooped down over the wreck."

"It seems impossible that it could have suddenly got cold enough to freeze everything up like that."

"It does, and yet I am confident that that is what happened. It was no ordinary cold, Carnes; it was cold of the type that infests interstellar space; cold beyond any conception you have of cold, cold near the range of the absolute zero of temperature, nearly four hundred and fifty degrees below zero on the Fahrenheit scale. At such temperatures, things which are ordinarily quite flexible and elastic, such as rubber, or flesh, become as brittle as glass and would break in the manner which these bodies have broken. An examination of the tissues of the flesh shows that it has been submitted to some temperature that is very low in the scale, probably below that of liquid air. Such a temperature would produce instant death and the other phenomena which we can observe."

"What could cause such a low temperature, Doctor?"

"I don't know yet, although I hope to find out before we are finished. Cold is a funny thing, Carnes. Ordinarily it is considered as simply the absence of heat; and yet I have always held it to be a definite negative quantity. All through nature we observe that every force has its opposite or negative force to oppose it. We have positive and negative electrical charges, positive and negative, or north and south, magnetic poles. We have gravity and its

opposite apergy, and I believe cold is really negative heat."

"I never heard of anything like that, Doctor. I always thought that things were cold because heat was taken from them—not because cold was added. It sounds preposterous."

"SUCH is the common idea, and yet I cannot accept it, for it does not explain all the recorded phenomena. You are familiar with a searchlight, are you not?"

"In a general way, yes,"

"A searchlight is merely a source of light, and of course, of heat, which is placed at the focus of a parabolic reflector so that all of the rays emanating from the source travel in parallel lines. A searchlight, of course, gives off heat. If we place a lens of the same size as the searchlight aperture in the path of the beam and concentrate all the light, and heat, at one spot, the focal point of the lens, the temperature at that point is the same as the temperature of the source of the light, less what has been lost by radiation. You understand that, do you not?"

"Certainly."

"Suppose that we place at the center of the aperture of the searchlight a small opaque disc which is permeable neither to heat nor light, in such a manner as to interrupt the central portion of the beam. As a result, the beam will go out in the form of a hollow rod, or pipe, of heat and light with a dark, cold core. This core will have the temperature of the surrounding air plus the small amount which has radiated into it from the surrounding pipe. If we now pass this beam of light through a lens in order to concentrate the beam, both the pipe of heat and the cold core will focus. If we place a temperature measuring device near the focus of the dark core, we will find that the temperature is lower than the surrounding air. This means that we have focussed or concentrated cold."

"That sounds impossible. But I can offer no other criticism."

"NEVERTHELESS, it is experimentally true. It is one of the facts which lead me to consider cold as negative heat. However, this is true of cold, as it is of the other negative forces; they exist and manifest themselves only in the presence of the positive forces. No one has yet concentrated cold except in the presence of heat, as I have outlined. How this cold belt which the T. A. C. plane encountered came to be there is another question. The thing which we have to determine is whether it was caused by natural or artificial forces."

"Both of the packets which the plane carried are gone, Doctor," observed Carnes.

"Yes, and that seems to add weight to the possibility that the cause was artificial, but it is far from conclusive. The packets might not have been on the men when the plane fell, or some one may have passed later and taken them for safekeeping."

The doctor's remarks were interrupted by the guides.

"Some one has been here since the wreck, Doctor," said Bill. "Walter and I found tracks where two men came up here and prowled around for some time and then left by the way they came. They went off toward the northwest, and we followed their trail for about forty rods and then lost it. We weren't able to pick it up again."

"Thanks, Bill," replied the doctor. "Well, Carnes, that seems to add more weight to the theory that the spot of cold was made and didn't just happen. If a prospecting party had just happened along they would either have left the wreck alone or would have made some attempt to inter the bodies. That cold belt must have been produced artificially by men who planned to rob this plane after bringing it down and who were near at hand to get their plunder. Is there any chance of following that trail?"

"I doubt it, Doc. Walter and I scouted around quite a little, but we couldn't pick it up again."

"Is there any power line passing within twenty miles of here?"

"None that Walter and I know of, Doc."

"Funny! Such a device as must have been used would need power and lots of it for operation. Well, I'll try my luck. Carnes, help me unpack and set up the rest of my apparatus."

WITH the aid of the operative, Dr. Bird unpacked two of the burros and extracted from cases where they were carefully packed and padded some elaborate electrical and optical apparatus. The first was a short telescope of large diameter which he mounted on a base in such a manner that it could be elevated or depressed and rotated in any direction. At the focal point of the telescope was fastened a small knot of wire from which one lead ran to the main piece of apparatus, which he sat on a flat rock. The other lead from the wire knot ran into a sealed container surrounded by a water bath under which a spirit lamp burned. From the container another lead led to the main apparatus. This main piece consisted of a series of wire coils mounted on a frame and attached to the two leads. The doctor took from a padded case a tiny magnet suspended on a piece of wire of exceedingly small diameter which he fastened in place inside the coils. Cemented to the magnet was a tiny mirror.

"What is that apparatus?" asked Carnes as the doctor finished his setup and surveyed it with satisfaction.

"Merely a thermocouple attached to a D'Arsonval galvanometer," replied the doctor. "This large, squat telescope catches and concentrates on the thermocouple and the galvanometer registers the temperature."

"You're out of my depth. What is a thermocouple?"

"A juncture of two wires made of dissimilar metals, in this case of platinum and of platinum-iridium alloy. There is another similar junction in this case, which is kept at a constant temperature by the water bath. When the temperatures of the two junctions are the same, the system is in equilibrium. When they are at different temperatures, an electrical potential is set up, which causes a current to flow from one to the other through the galvanometer. The galvanometer consists of a magnet set up inside coils through which the current I spoke of flows. This current causes the magnet to rotate and by watching the mirror, the rotation can be detected and measured.

"This device is one of the most sensitive ever made, and is used to measure the radiation from distant stars. Currents as small as .0000000000000000001 ampere have been detected and measured. This particular instrument is not that sensitive to begin with, and has its sensitivity further reduced by having a high resistance in one of the leads."

"What are you going to use it for?"

"I am going to try to locate somewhere in these hills a patch of local cold. It may not work, but I have hopes. If you will manipulate the telescope so as to search the hills around here, I will watch the galvanometer."

FOR several minutes Carnes swung the telescope around. Twice Dr. Bird stopped him and decreased the sensitiveness of his instrument by introducing more resistance in the lines in order to keep the magnet from twisting clear around, due to the fluctuations in the heats received on account of the varying conditions of reflection. As Carnes swung the telescope again, the magnet swung around sharply, nearly to a right angle to its former position.

"Stop!" cried the doctor. "Read your azimuth."

Carnes read the compass bearing on the protractor attached to the frame which supported the telescope. Dr. Bird took a pair of binoculars and looked long and earnestly in the indicated direction. With a sigh he laid down the glasses.

"I can't see a thing, Carnesy," he said. "We'll have to move over to the next crest and make a new setup. Plant a rod on the hill so that we can get an azimuth bearing and get the airline distance with a range finder."

On the hilltop which Dr. Bird had pointed out the apparatus was again set up. For several minutes Carnes swept the hills before an exclamation from the doctor told him to pause. He read the new azimuth, and the doctor laid off the two readings on a sheet of paper with a protractor and made a few calculations.

"I don't know," he said reflectively when he had finished his computations. "This darned instrument is still so sensitive that you may have merely focused on a deep shadow or a cold spring or something of that sort, but the magnet kicked clear around and it may mean that we have located what we are looking for. It should be about two miles away and almost due west of here."

"There is no spring that I know of, Doc, and I think I know of every water hole in this country," remarked Bill.

"There could hardly be a spring at this elevation, anyway," replied the doctor. "Maybe it is what we are seeking. We'll start out in that direction, anyway. Bill, you had better take the lead, for you know the country. Spread out a little so that we won't be too bunched if anything happens."

FOR three-quarters of an hour the little group of men made their way through the wilderness in the direction indicated by the doctor. Presently Bill, who was in the lead, held up his hand with a warning gesture. The other three closed up as rapidly as cautious progress would allow.

"What is it, Bill?" asked the doctor in an undertone.

"Slip up ahead and look over that crest."

The doctor obeyed instructions. As he glanced over he gave vent to a low whistle of surprise and motioned for Carnes to join him. The operative crawled up and glanced over the crest. In a hollow before them was a crude one-storied house, and erected on an open space before it was a massive piece of apparatus. It consisted of a number of huge metallic cylinders, from which lines ran to a silvery concave mirror mounted on an elaborate frame which would allow it to be rotated so as to point in any direction.

"What is it?" whispered Carnes.

"Some kind of a projector," muttered the doctor. "I never saw one quite like it, but it is meant to project something. I can't make out the curve of that mirror. It isn't a parabola and it isn't an ellipse. It must be a high degree subcatenary or else built on a transcendental function."

He raised himself to get a clearer view, and as he did so a puff of smoke came from the house, to be followed in a moment by a sharp crack as a bullet flattened itself a few inches from his head. The doctor tumbled back over the crest out of sight of the house. Bill and Walter hurried forward, their rifles held ready for action.

"Get out on the flanks, men," directed the doctor. "The man we want is in a house in that hollow. He's armed, and he means business."

BILL and Walter crawled under the shelter of the rocks to a short distance away and then, rifles ready, advanced to the attack. A report came from the hollow and a bullet whined over Bill's head. Almost instantly a crack came from Walter's rifle and splinters flew from the building in the hollow a few inches from a loophole, through which projected the barrel of a rifle.

The rifle barrel swung rapidly in a circle and barked in Walter's direction; but as it did so, Bill's gun spoke and again splinters flew from the building.

"Good work!" ejaculated Dr. Bird as he watched the slow advance of the two guides. "If we just had rifles we could

join in the party, but it's a little far for effective pistol work. Let's go ahead, and we may get close enough to do a little shooting."

Pistols in hand, Carnes and the doctor crawled over the crest and joined the advance. Again and again the rifle spoke from the hollow and was answered by the vicious barks of the rifles in the hands of the guides, Carnes and the doctor resting their pistols on rocks and sending an occasional bullet toward the loophole. The conditions of light and the moving target were not conducive to good marksmanship on the part of the besieged man, and none of the attackers were hit. Presently Walter succeeded in sending a bullet through the loophole. The rifle barrel suddenly disappeared. With a shout the four men rose from their cover and advanced toward the building at a run.

As they did so an ominous whirring sound came from the apparatus in front of the house and a sudden chill filled the air.

"Back!" shouted Dr. Bird. "Back below the hill if you value your lives!"

He turned and raced at full speed toward the sheltering crest of the hill, the others following him closely. The whirring sound continued, and the concave reflector turned with a grating sound on its gears. As the path of its rays struck the ground the rocks became white with frost and one rock split with a sharp report, one fragment rolling down the slope, carrying others in its trail.

WITH panic-stricken faces the four men raced toward the sheltering crest, but remorselessly the reflector swung around in their direction. The intense cold numbed the racing men, cutting off their breath and impeding their efforts for speed.

"Stop!" cried the doctor suddenly. "Fire at that reflector! It's our only chance!"

He set the example by turning and emptying his pistol futilely at the turning mirror. Bill, Walter and Carnes followed his example. Nearer and nearer to them came the deadly ray. Bill was the nearest to its path, and he suddenly stiffened and fell forward, his useless gun still grasped in his hands. As his body struck the ground it rolled down hill for a few feet, the deadly ray following it. His head struck a rock, and Carnes gave a cry of horror as it broke into fragments.

Walter threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired again and again at the rotating disc. The cold had became intense and he could not control the actions of his muscles and his rifle wavered about. He threw himself flat on the ground, and, with an almost superhuman effort, steadied himself for a moment and fired. His aim was true, and with a terrific crash the reflector split into a thousand fragments. Dr. Bird staggered to his feet.

"It's out of order for a moment!" he cried. "To the house while we can!"

As swiftly as his numbed feet would allow him, he stumbled toward the house. The muzzle of the rifle again projected from the loophole and with its crack the doctor staggered for a moment and then fell. Walter's rifle spoke again and the rifle disappeared through the loophole with a spasmodic jerk. Carnes stumbled over the doctor.

"Are you hit badly?" he gasped through chattering teeth.

"I'm not hit at all," muttered the doctor. "I stumbled and fell just as he fired. Look out! He's going to shoot again!"

The rifle barrel came slowly into view through the loophole. Walter fired, but his bullet went wild. Carnes threw himself behind a rock for protection.

THE rifle swung in Walter's direction and paused. As it did so, from the house came a strangled cry and a sound as of a blow. The rifle barrel disappeared, and the sounds of a struggle came from the building.

"Come on!" cried Carnes as he rose to his feet, and made his stumbling way

forward, the others following at the best speed which their numbed limbs would allow.

As they reached the door they were aware of a struggle which was going on inside. With an oath the doctor threw his massive frame against the door. It creaked, but the solid oak of which it was composed was proof against the attack, and he drew back for another onslaught. From the house came a pistol shot, followed by a despairing cry and a guttural shout. Reinforced by Carnes, the doctor threw his weight against the door again. With a rending crash it gave, and they fell sprawling into the cabin. The doctor was the first one on his feet.

"Who are you?" asked a voice from one corner. The doctor whirled like a flash and covered the speaker with his pistol.

"Put them up!" he said tersely.

"I am unarmed," the voice replied. "Who are you?"

"We're from the United States Secret Service," replied Carnes who had gained his feet. "The game is up for you, and you'd better realize it."

"Secret Service! Thank God!" cried the voice. "Get Koskoff—he has the plans. He has gone out through the tunnel!"

"Where is it?" demanded Carnes.

"The entrance is that iron plate on the floor."

Carnes and the doctor jumped at the plate and tried to lift it, without result. There was no handle or projection on which they could take hold.

"Not that way," cried the voice. "That cover is fastened on the inside. Go outside the building; he'll come out about two hundred yards north. Shoot him as he appears or he'll get away."

The three men nearly tumbled over each other to get through the doorway into the bitter cold outside. As they emerged from the cabin the gaze of the guide swept the surrounding hills.

"There he goes!" he cried.

"Get him!" said Carnes sharply.

Walter ran forward a few feet and dropped prone on the ground, cuddling the stock of his rifle to his cheek. Two hundred yards ahead a figure was scurrying over the rocks away from the cabin. Walter drew in his breath and his hand suddenly grew steady as his keen gray eyes peered through the sights. Carnes and the doctor held their breath in sympathy.

SUDDENLY the rifle spoke, and the fleeing man threw up his arms and fell forward on his face.

"Got him," said Walter laconically.

"Go bring the body in, Carnes," exclaimed the doctor. "I'll take care of the chap inside."

"Did you get him?" asked the voice eagerly, as the doctor stepped inside.

"He's dead all right," replied the doctor grimly. "Who the devil are you, and what are you doing here?"

"There is a light switch on the left of the door as you come in," was the reply.

Dr. Bird found the switch and snapped on a light. He turned toward the corner from whence the voice had come and recoiled in horror. Propped in the corner was the body of a middle-aged man, daubed and splashed with blood which ran from a wound in the side of his head.

"Good Lord!" he ejaculated. "Let me help you."

"There's not much use," replied the man rather faintly. "I am about done in. This face wound doesn't amount to much, but I am shot through the body and am bleeding internally. If you try to move me, it may easily kill me. Leave me alone until your partners come."

The doctor drew a flask of brandy from his pocket and advanced toward the corner.

"Take a few drops of this," he advised.

With an effort the man lifted the flask to his lips and gulped down a little of the fiery spirit. A sound of tramping feet came from the outside and then a thud as though a body had

been dropped. Carnes and Walter entered the cabin.

"He's dead as a mackerel," said Carnes in answer to the doctor's look. "Walter got him through the neck and broke his spinal cord. He never knew what hit him."

"The plans?" came in a gasping voice from the man in the corner.

"We got them, too," replied Carnes. "He had both packets inside his coat. They have been opened, but I guess they are all here. Who the devil are you?"

"Since Koskoff is dead, and I am dying, there is no reason why I shouldn't tell you," was the answer. "Leave that brandy handy to keep up my strength. I have only a short time and I can't repeat.

"AS to who I am or what I was, it doesn't really matter. Koskoff knew me as John Smith, and it will pass as well as any other name. Let my past stay buried. I am, or was, a scientist of some ability; but fortune frowned on me, and I was driven out of the world. Money would rehabilitate me—money will do anything nowadays—so I set out to get it. In the course of my experimental work, I had discovered that cold was negative heat and reacted to the laws which governed heat."

"I knew that," cried Dr. Bird; "but I never could prove it."

"Who are you?" demanded John Smith.

"Dr. Bird, of the Bureau of Standards."

"Oh, Bird. I've heard of you. You can understand me when I say that as heat, positive heat is a concomitant of ordinary light, I have found that cold, negative heat, is a concomitant of cold light. Is my apparatus in good shape outside?"

"The reflector is smashed."

"I'm sorry. You would have enjoyed studying it. I presume that you saw that it was a catenary curve?"

"I rather thought so."

"It was, and it was also adjustable. I could vary the focal point from a few feet to several miles. With that apparatus I could throw a beam of negative heat with a focal point which I could adjust at will. Close to the apparatus, I could obtain a temperature almost down to absolute zero, but at the longer ranges it wasn't so cold, due to leakage into the atmosphere. Even at two miles I could produce a local temperature of three hundred degrees below zero."

"What was the source of your cold?"

"Liquid helium. Those cylinders contain, or rather did contain, for I expect that Koskoff has emptied them, helium in a liquid state."

"Where is your compressor?"

"I DIDN'T have to use one. I developed a cold light under whose rays helium would liquefy and remain in a state of equilibrium until exposed to light rays. Those cylinders had merely enough pressure to force the liquid out to where the sun could hit it, and then it turned to a gas, dropping the temperature at the first focal point of the reflector to absolute zero. When I had this much done, Koskoff and I packed the whole apparatus here and were ready for work.

"We were on the path of the transcontinental air mail, and I bided my time until an especially valuable shipment was to be made. My plans, which worked perfectly, were to freeze the plane in midair and then rob the wreck. I heard of the jewel shipment the T.A.C. was to carry and I planned to get it. When the plane came over, Koskoff and I brought it down. The unsuspected presence of another plane upset us a little, and I started to bring it down. But we had been all over this country and knew there was no place that a plane could land, I let it go on in safety."

"Thank you," replied Carnes with a grimace.

"We robbed the wreck and we found two packets, one the jewels I was after,

and the other a sealed packet, which proved to contain certain War Department plans. That was when I learned who Koskoff was. I had hired him in San Francisco as a good mechanic who had no principles. He was to get one-fourth of the loot. When we found these plans, he told me who he was. He was really a Russian secret agent and he wanted to deliver the plans to Russia. I may be a thief and a murderer, but I am not yet ready to betray my country, and I told him so. He offered me almost any price for the plans; but I wouldn't listen. We had a serious quarrel, and he overpowered me and bound me.

"WE had a radio set here and he called San Francisco and sent some code message. I think he was waiting here for some one to come. Had we followed our original plans, we would have been miles from here before you arrived.

"He had me bound and helpless, as he thought, but I worked my bonds a little loose. I didn't let him know it, for I knew that the plane I had let get away would guide a party here and I thought I might be able to help out. When you came and attacked the house, I worked at my bonds until they were loose enough to throw off. I saw Koskoff start my cold apparatus to working and then he quit, because he ran out of helium. When he started shooting again, I worked out of my bonds and tackled him.

"He was a better man than I gave him credit for, or else he suspected me, for about the time I grabbed him he whirled and struck me over the head with his gun barrel and tore my face open. The blow stunned me, and when I came to, I was thrown into this corner. I meant to have another try at it, but I guess you rushed him too fast. He turned and ran for the tunnel, but as he did so, he shot me through the body. I guess I didn't look dead enough to suit him. You gentlemen broke open the door and came in. That's all."

"Not by a long shot, it isn't," exclaimed Dr. Bird. "Where is that cold light apparatus of yours?"

"In the tunnel."

"How do you get into it?"

"If you will open that cupboard on the wall, you'll find an open knife switch on the wall. Close it."

DR. BIRD found the switch and closed it. As he did so the cabin rocked on its foundations and both Carnes and Walter were thrown to the ground. The thud of a detonation deep in the earth came to their ears.

"What was that?" cried the doctor.

"That," replied Smith with a wan smile, "was the detonation of two hundred pounds of T.N.T. When you dig down into the underground cave where we used the cold light apparatus, you will find it in fragments. It was my only child, and I'll take it with me."

As he finished his head slumped forward on his chest. With an exclamation of dismay Dr. Bird sprang forward and tried to lift the prostrate form.

In an agony of desire the Doctor tightened his grip on the dying man's shoulder. But Smith collapsed into a heap. Dr. Bird bent forward and tore open his shirt and listened at his chest. Presently he straightened up.

"He is gone," he said sadly, "and I guess the results of his genius have died with him. He doesn't strike me as a man who left overmuch to chance. Carnes, is your case completed?"

"Very satisfactorily, Doctor. I have both of the lost packets."

"All right, then, come back to the wreck and help me pack my burros. I can make my way back to Fallon without a guide."

"Where are you going, Doctor?"

"That, Carnes, old dear, is none of your blankety blanked business. Permit me to remind you that I am on my vacation. I haven't decided yet just where I am going, but I can tell you one thing. It's going to be some place where you can't call me on the telephone."

I stood on the turret-balcony of the Planetara with Dr. Frank, watching the arriving passengers.

Brigands of the Moon

(The Book of Gregg Haljan)

BEGINNING A FOUR-PART NOVEL

By Ray Cummings

Foreword by Ray Cummings

I HAVE been thinking that if, during one of those long winter evenings at Valley Forge, someone had placed in George Washington's hands one of our present day best sellers, the illustrious Father of our Country would have read it with considerable emotion. I do not mean what we call a story of science, or fantasy—just a novel of action, adventure and romance. The sort of thing you and I like to read,

Black mutiny and brigandage stalk the Space-ship Planetara as she speeds to the Moon to pick up a fabulously rich cache of radium-ore.

but do not find amazing in any way at all.

But I fancy that George Washington would have found it amazing. Don't you? It might picture, for instance, a factory girl at a sewing machine. George Washington would be amazed at a sewing machine! And the girl, journeying in the subway to and from her work! Stealing an opportunity to telephone her lover at the noon hour; going to the movies in the evening; or listening to a radio. And there might be a climax, perhaps, with the girl and the villain in a transcontinental railway Pullman, and the hero sending frantic telegrams, or telephoning the train, and then chasing it in his airplane.

George Washington would have found it amazing!

And I am wondering how you and I would feel if someone were to give us now a book of ordinary adventure of the sort which will be published a hundred and fifty years hence. I have been trying to imagine such a book and the nature of its contents.

LET us imagine it together. Suppose we walk down Fifth Avenue, a pleasant spring morning of May, 2080. Fifth Avenue, no doubt, will be there. I don't know whether the New York Public Library will be there or not. We'll assume that it is, and that it has some sort of books, printed, or in whatever fashion you care to imagine.

The young man library attendant is surprised at our curiously antiquated aspect. We look as though we were dressed for some historical costume ball. We talk old-fashioned English, like actors in an historical play of the 1930 period.

But we get the book. The attendant assures us it is a good average story of action and adventure. Nothing remarkable, but he read it himself, and found it interesting.

We thank him and take the book. But we find that the language in which it is written is too strange for comfortable reading. And it names so many extraordinary things so casually! As though [illegible] knew all about them, which we certainly [illegible]!

So we take [illegible] to the kind-hearted librarian in the language division. He modifies it to old-fashioned English of 1930, and he puts occasional footnotes to help explain some of the things we might not understand. Why he should bother to do this for us I don't know; but let us assume that he does.

And now we take the book home—in the pneumatic tube, or aerial moving sidewalk, or airship, or whatever it is we take to get home.

And now that we are home, let's read the book. It ought to be interesting.

CHAPTER I

Tells of the Grantline Moon Expedition and of the Mysterious Martian Who Followed Us in the City Corridor

ONE may write about oneself and still not be an egoist. Or so, at least, they tell me. My narrative went broadcast with a fair success. It was pantomimed and the public flashed me a reasonable approval. And so my disc publishers have suggested that I record it in more permanent form.

I introduce myself, begging grace that I intrude upon your busy minutes, with my only excuse that perhaps I may amuse you. For what the commercial sellers of my pictured version were pleased to blare as my handsome face, I ask your indulgence. My feminine audience of the pantomimes was undoubtedly graciously pleased at my personality and physical aspect. That I am "tall as a Viking of old"—and "handsome as a young Norse God"—is very pretty talk in the selling of my product. But I deplore its intrusion into the personality of this, my recorded narrative. And so now, for preface, to all my audience I do give earnest assurance that Gregg Haljan is no conceited zebra, handsomely striped by nature, and proud of it. Not so. I am, I do beg you to believe, a very humble fellow, striving for your approval, hoping only to entertain you.

My introduction: My name, Gregg Haljan. My age, twenty-five years. I was, at the time my narrative begins, Third Officer on the Space-Ship Planetara. Our line was newly established; in 2070, to be exact, following the modern improvements of the Martel Magnetic Levitation.*

OUR ship, whose home port was Great-New York, carried mail and passenger traffic to and from both Venus and Mars. Of astronomical necessity, our flights were irregular. This spring, with the two other planets both close to the earth, we were making two complete round trips. We had just arrived in Great-New York, this May evening, from Grebhar, Venus Free State. With only five hours in port

* As early as 1910 it was discovered that an object magnetized under certain conditions was subject to a loss of weight, its gravity partially nullified. The Martel discovery undoubtedly followed that method.

here, we were departing the same night at the zero hour for Ferrok-Shahn, capital of the Martian Union.

We were no sooner at the landing stage than I found a code-flash summoning Dan Dean and me to Divisional Detective Headquarters. Dan "Snap" Dean was one of my closest friends. He was radio-helio operator of the Planetara. A small, wiry, red-headed chap, with a quick, ready laugh and a wit that made everyone like him.

The summons to Detective-Colonel Halsey's office surprised us. Snap eyed me.

"You haven't been opening any treasury vaults, have you, Gregg?"

"He wants you, also," I retorted.

He laughed. "Well, he can roar at me like a traffic switchman and my private life will remain my own."

We could not think why we should be wanted. It was the darkness of mid-evening when we left the Planetara for Halsey's office. It was not a long trip. We went direct in the upper monorail, descending into the subterranean city at Park-Circle 30.

WE had never been to Halsey's office before. We found it to be a gloomy, vaultlike place in one of the deepest corridors. The door lifted.

"Gregg Hallan and Daniel Dean."

The guard stood aside. "Come in."

I own that my heart was unduly thumping as we entered. The door dropped behind us. It was a small blue-lit apartment—a steel-lined room like a vault.

Colonel Halsey sat at his desk. And the big, heavy-set, florid Captain Carter—our commander of the Planetara—was here. That surprised us: we had not seen him leave the ship.

Halsey smiled at us gravely. Captain Carter said, "Sit down, lads."

We took the seats. There was an alarming solemnity about this. If I had been guilty of anything that I could think of, it would have been frightening. But Halsey's first words reassured me.

"It's about the Grantline Moon Expedition. In spite of our secrecy, the news has gotten out. We want to know how. Can you tell us?"

Captain Carter's huge bulk—he was about as tall as I am—towered over us as we sat before Halsey's desk. "If you lads have told anyone — said anything—let slip the slightest hint about it—"

Snap smiled with relief; but he turned solemn at once. "I haven't. Not a word!"

"Nor have I," I declared.

THE Grantline Moon Expedition! We had not thought of that as a reason for this summons. Johnny Grantline was a close friend to us both. He had organized an exploring expedition to the Moon. Uninhabited, with its bleak, forbidding, airless, waterless surface, the Moon — even though so close to the Earth—was seldom visited. No regular ship ever stopped there. A few exploring parties of recent years had come to grief.

But there was a persistent rumor that upon the Moon, mineral riches of fabulous wealth were awaiting discovery. The thing had already caused some interplanetary complications. The aggressive Martians would be only too glad to explore the Moon. But the U. S. W.* definitely warned them away. The Moon was World Territory, we announced, and we would protect it as such.

The threatened conflict between the Earth and Mars had come to nothing. There was, this year of 2079, a thorough amity between all three of the inhabited planets. It still holds, and I pray that it may always hold.

There was, nevertheless, a realization by our government, that whatever riches might be upon the Moon should be seized at once and held by some reputable Earth Company. And when Johnny

* "United States of the World," which came into being in 2067 upon the centenary of the Yellow War.

Grantline applied, with his father's wealth and his own scientific record of attainment, the government was only too glad to grant him its writ.

THE Grantline Expedition had started six months ago. The Martian government had acquiesced in our ultimatum, yet brigands have been known to be financed under cover of a governmental disavowal. And so the expedition was kept secret.

My words need give no offense to any Martian who comes upon them. I refer to the history of our earth only. The Grantline Expedition was on the Moon now. No word had come from it. One could not flash helios even in code without letting all the universe know that explorers were on the Moon. And why they were there, anyone could easily guess.

And now Colonel Halsey was telling us that the news was abroad! Captain Carter eyed us closely; his flashing eyes under the white bushy brows would pry a secret from anyone.

"You're sure? A girl of Venus, perhaps, with her cursed, seductive lure! A chance word, with you lads befuddled by alcolite?"

We assured him we had been careful. By the heavens, I know that I had been. Not a whisper, even to Snap, of the name Grantline in six months or more.

Captain Carter added abruptly, "We're insulated here, Halsey?"

"Yes, talk as freely as you like. An eavesdropping ray will never get into these walls."

THEY questioned us. They were satisfied at last that, though the secret had escaped, we had not done it. Hearing it discussed, it occurred to me to wonder why Carter was concerned. I was not aware that he knew of Grantline's venture. I learned now the reason why the Planetara, upon each of her voyages, had managed to pass fairly close to the Moon. It had been arranged with Grantline that if he wanted help or had any important message, he was to flash it locally to our passing ship. And this Snap knew, and had never mentioned it, even to me.

Halsey was saying, "Well, we can't blame you, but the secret is out."

Snap and I regarded each other. What could anyone do? What would anyone dare do?

Captain Carter said abruptly, "Look here, lads, this is my chance now to talk plainly to you. Outside, anywhere outside these walls, an eavesdropping ray may be upon us. You know that? One may never even dare whisper since that accursed ray was developed."

Snap opened his mouth to speak but decided against it. My heart was pounding.

Captain Carter went on, "I know I can trust you two more than anyone else under me on the Planetara—"

"What do you mean by that?" I demanded. "What—"

He interrupted me. "Nothing at all but what I say."

HALSEY smiled grimly. "What he means, Haljan, is that things are not always what they seem these days. One cannot always tell a friend from an enemy. The Planetara is a public vessel. You have—how many is it, Carter?—thirty or forty passengers this trip to-night?"

"Thirty-eight," said Carter.

"There are thirty-eight people listed for the flight to Ferrok-Shahn to-night," Halsey said slowly. "And some may not be what they seem." He raised his thin dark hand. "We have information—" He paused. "I confess, we know almost nothing — hardly more than enough to alarm us."

Captain Carter interjected, "I want you and Dean to be on your guard. Once on the Planetara it is difficult for us to talk openly, but be watchful. I will arrange for us to be doubly armed."

Vague, perturbing words! Halsey said, "They tell me George Prince is listed for the voyage. I am suggesting,

Haljan, that you keep your eye especially upon him. Your duties on the Planetara leave you comparatively free, don't they?"

"Yes," I agreed. With the first and second officers on duty, and the captain aboard, my routine was more or less that of an understudy.

I said, "George Prince! Who is he?"

"A mechanical engineer," said Halsey. "An under-official of the Earth Federated Radium Corporation. But he associates with bad companions—particularly Martians."

I had never heard of this George Prince, though I was familiar with the Federated Radium Corporation, of course. A semi-government trust, which controlled virtually the entire Earth supply of radium.

"He was in the Automotive Department," Carter put in. "You've heard of the Federated Radium Motor?"

WE had, of course. A recent Earth invention which promised to revolutionize the automotive industry. An engine of a new type, using radium as its fuel.

Snap demanded, "What in the stars has this got to do with Johnny Grantline?"

"Much," said Halsey quietly, "or perhaps nothing. But George Prince some years ago mixed in rather unethical transactions. We had him in custody once. He is known now as unusually friendly with several Martians in New York of bad reputation."

"Well—" began Snap.

"What you don't know," Halsey went on quietly, "is that Grantline expects to find radium on the Moon."

We gasped.

"Exactly," said Halsey. "The ill-fated Ballon Expedition thought they had found it on the Moon some years ago. A new type of ore, as rich in radium as our gold-bearing sands are rich in gold. Ballon's first samples gave uranium atoms with a fair representation of ionium and thorium. A richly radioactive ore. A lode of the pure radium is there somewhere, without doubt."

HE added vehemently, "Do you understand now why we should be suspicious of this George Prince? He has a criminal record. He has a thorough technical knowledge of radium ores. He associates with Martians of bad reputation. A large Martian Company has recently developed a radium engine to compete with our Earth motor. You know that? You know that there is very little radium available on Mars, and our government will not allow our own radium supply to be exported. That Martian Company needs radium. It will do anything to get radium. What do you suppose it would pay for a few tons of really rich radioactive ore—such as Grantline may have found on the Moon?"

"But," I objected, "that is a reputable Martian company. It's backed by the government of the Martian Union. The government of Mars would not dare—"

"Of course not!" Captain Carter exclaimed sardonically. "Not openly! But if Martian brigands had a supply of radium—I don't imagine where it came from would make much difference. That Martian Company would buy it."

Halsey added, "And George Prince, my agents inform me, seems to know that Grantline is on the Moon. Put it all together, lads. Little sparks show the hidden current.

"More than that: George Prince knows that we have arranged to have the Planetara stop at the Moon and bring back Grantline's radium-ore. This is your last voyage this year. You'll hear from Grantline this time, we're convinced. He'll probably give you the signal as you pass the Moon on your way out. Coming back, you'll stop at the Moon and transport whatever radium-ore Grantline has ready. The Grantline Flyer is too small for ore transportation."

HALSEY'S voice turned grimly sarcastic. "Doesn't it seem queer that George Prince and a few of his

Martian friends happen to be listed as passengers for this voyage?"

In the silence that followed, Snap and I regarded each other. Halsey added abruptly,

"We had George Prince typed that time we arrested him four years ago. I'll show him to you."

He snapped open an alcove, and said to his waiting attendant, "Get me the type of George Prince."

The disc in a moment came through the pneumatic. Halsey, smiling wryly, adjusted it.

"A nice looking fellow. Nicely spoken. Though at the time we made this he was somewhat annoyed, naturally. He is older now. Twenty-nine, to be exact. Here he is."

The image glowed on the grids before us. His name, George Prince, in letters illumined upon his forehead, showed for a moment and then faded. He stood smiling sourly before us as he repeated the official formula:

"My name is George Prince. I was born in Great-New York City twenty-five years ago."

I GAZED at this life-size, moving image of George Prince. He stood somber in the black detention uniform. A dark, almost a girlishly handsome fellow, well below medium height—the rod beside him showed five feet four inches. Slim and slight. Long, wavy black hair, falling about his ears. A pale, clean-cut, really handsome face, almost beardless. I regarded it closely. A face that would have been femininely beautiful without its masculine touch of heavy black brows and firmly set jaw. His voice as he spoke was low and soft; but at the end, with the concluding words, "I am innocent!" it flashed into strong masculinity. His eyes, shaded with long girlish black lashes, by chance met mine. "I am innocent." His curving sensuous lips drew down into a grim sneer. . . .

The type faded at its end. Halsey replaced the disc in its box and waved the attendant away. "Thank you."

He turned back to Snap and me. "Well, there he is. We have nothing tangible against him now. But I'll say this: he's a clever fellow, one to be afraid of. I would not blare it from the newscasters' microphone, but if he is hatching any plot, he has been too clever for my agents."

We talked for another half-hour, and then Captain Carter dismissed us. We left Halsey's office with Carter's final words ringing in our ears. "Whatever comes, lads, remember I trust you. . . ."

SNAP and I decided to walk a portion of the way back to the ship. It was barely more than a mile through this subterranean corridor to where we could get the vertical lift direct to the landing stage.

We started off on the lower level. Once outside the insulation of Halsey's office we did not dare talk of this thing. Not only electrical ears, but every possible eavesdropping device might be upon us. The corridor was two hundred feet or more below the ground level. At this hour of the night this business section was comparatively deserted. The through tube sounded over our heads with the passing of its occasional trains. The ventilators buzzed and whirred. At the cross intersections, the traffic directors dozed at their posts. It was hot and sticky down here, and gloomy with the daylight globes extinguished, and only the night lights to give a dim illumination. The stores and office arcades were all closed and deserted; only an occasional night-light burning behind their windows.

Our footfalls echoed on the metal grids as we hurried along.

"Nice evening," said Snap awkwardly.

"Yes," I said, "isn't it?"

I felt oppressed. As though prying eyes and ears were here. We walked for a time in silence, each of us busy with memory of what had transpired in Halsey's office.

Suddenly Snap gripped me. "What's that?"

"Where?" I whispered.

WE stopped at a corner. An entryway was here. Snap pulled me into it. I could feel him quivering with excitement.

"What is it?" I demanded in a whisper.

"We're being followed. Did you hear anything?"

"No!" Yet I thought now I could hear something. Vague footfalls. A rustling. And a microscopic electrical whine, as though some device were near us.

Snap was fumbling in his pocket. "Wait, I've got a pair of low-scale phones."

He put the little grids against his ears. I could hear the sharp intake of his breath. Then he seized me, pulled me down to the metal floor of the entryway.

"Back, Gregg! Get back!" I could barely hear his whisper. We crouched as far back into the doorway as we could get. I was armed. My official permit for the carrying of the pencil heat-ray allowed me to have it always with me. I drew it now. But there was nothing to shoot at. I felt Snap clamping the grids on my ears. And now I heard something! An intensification of the vague footsteps I had thought I heard before.

There was something following us! Something out in the corridor there now! A street light was nearby. The corridor was dim, but plainly visible; and to my sight it was empty. But there was something there. Something invisible! I could hear it moving. Creeping towards us. I pulled the grids off my ears.

Snap murmured, "You've got a local phone."

"Yes! I'll get them to give us the street glare!"

I PRESSED the danger signal, giving our location to the nearest operator. In a second or two we got the light. The street in all this neighborhood burst into a brilliant actinic glare. The thing menacing us was revealed! A figure in a black cloak, crouching thirty feet away across the corridor.

Snap was on his feet. His voice rang shrilly, "There it is! Give it a shot, Gregg!"

Snap was unarmed, but he flung his hands out menacingly. The figure, which may perhaps not have been aware of our city safeguard, was taken wholly by surprise. A human figure. Seven feet tall, at the least, and therefore, I judged, doubtless a Martian man. The black cloak covered his head. He took a step toward us, hesitated, and then turned in confusion.

Snap's shrill voice was bringing help. The whine of a street guard's alarm whistle nearby sounded. The figure was making off! My pencil-ray was in my hand and I pressed its switch. The tiny heat-ray stabbed through the glare, but I missed. The figure stumbled but did not fall. I saw a bare gray arm come from the cloak, flung up to maintain its balance. Or perhaps my pencil-ray of heat had seared the arm. The gray-skinned arm of a Martian.

Snap was shouting, "Give him another!" But the figure passed beyond the actinic glare and vanished.

We were detained in the turmoil of the corridor for ten minutes or more with official explanations. Then a message from Halsey released us. The Martian who had been following us in his invisible cloak was never caught.

We escaped from the crowd at last and made our way back to the Planetara, where the passengers were already assembling for the outward Martian voyage.

CHAPTER II

"*A Fleeting Glance*—"

I STOOD on the turret-balcony of the Planetara with Captain Carter and Dr. Frank, the ship surgeon, watching the arriving passengers. It was close to the zero hour: the level of the

stage was a turmoil of confusion. The escalators, with the last of the freight aboard, were folded back. But the stage was jammed with the incoming passenger baggage; the interplanetary customs and tax officials with their X-ray and Zed-ray paraphernalia and the passengers themselves, lined up for the export inspection.

At this height, the city lights lay spread in a glare of blue and yellow beneath us. The individual local planes came dropping like birds to our stage. Thirty-eight passengers for this flight to Mars, but that accursed desire of every friend and relative to speed the departing voyager brought a hundred or more extra people to crowd our girders and bring added difficulty to everybody.

Carter was too absorbed in his duties to stay with us long. But here in the turret Dr, Frank and I found ourselves at the moment with nothing much to do but watch.

"Think we'll get away on time, Gregg?"

"No," I said, "And this of all voyages—"

I checked myself, with thumping heart. My thoughts were so full of what Halsey and Carter had told us that it was difficult to rein my tongue. Yet here in the turret, unguarded by insulation, I could say nothing. Nor would I have dared mention the Grantline Moon Expedition to Dr. Frank. I wondered what he knew of this affair. Perhaps as much as I—perhaps nothing.

HE was a thin, dark, rather smallish man of fifty, this ship's surgeon, trim in his blue and white uniform. I knew him well: we had made several flights together. An American — I fancy of Jewish ancestry. A likable man, and a skillful doctor and surgeon. He and I had always been good friends.

"Crowded," he said. "Johnson says thirty-eight. I hope they're experienced travelers. This pressure sickness is a rotten nuisance—keeps me dashing around all night assuring frightened women they're not going to die. Last voyage, coming out of the Venus atmosphere—"

He plunged into a lugubrious account of his troubles with space-sick voyagers. But I was in no mood to listen. My gaze was down on the spider incline, up which, over the bend of the ship's sleek, silvery body, the passengers and their friends were coming in little groups. The upper deck was already jammed with them.

The Planetara, as flyers go, was not a large vessel. Cylindrical of body, forty feet maximum beam, and two hundred and seventy-five feet in overall length. The passenger superstructure—no more than a hundred feet long—was set amidships. A narrow deck, metallic-enclosed, and with large bulls-eye windows, encircled the superstructure. Some of the cabins opened directly onto the deck. Others had doors to the interior corridors. There were half a dozen small but luxurious public rooms.

THE rest of the vessel was given to freight storage and the mechanism and control compartments. Forward of the passenger structure the deck level continued under the cylindrical dome-roof to the bow. The forward watch-tower observatory was here; officers' cabins; Captain Carter's navigating rooms and Dr. Frank's office. Similarly, under the stern-dome, was the stern watch-tower and a series of power compartments.

Above the superstructure a confusion of spider bridges, ladders and balconies were laced like a metal network. The turret in which Dr. Frank and I now stood was perched here. Fifty feet away, like a bird's nest, Snap's instrument room stood clinging to the metal bridge. The dome roof, with the glassite windows rolled back now, rose in a mound-peak to cover this highest middle portion of the vessel.

Below, in the main hull, blue-lit metal corridors ran the entire length

of the ship. Freight storage compartments; gravity control rooms; the air renewal systems; heater and ventilators and pressure mechanisms—all were located there. And the kitchens, stewards' compartments, and the living quarters of the crew. We carried a crew of sixteen, this voyage, exclusive of the navigating officers, and the purser, Snap Dean, and Dr. Frank.

THE passengers coming aboard seemed a fair representation of what we usually had for the outward voyage to Ferrok-Shahn. Most were Earth people—and returning Martians. Dr. Frank pointed out one. A huge Martian in a gray cloak. A seven-foot fellow.

"His name is Set Miko," Dr. Frank remarked. "Ever heard of him?"

"No," I said. "Should I?"

"Well—" The doctor suddenly checked himself, as though he were sorry he had spoken.

"I never heard of him," I repeated slowly.

An awkward silence fell suddenly between us.

There were a few Venus passengers. I saw one of them presently coming up the incline, and recognized her. A girl traveling alone. We had brought her from Grebhar, last voyage but one. I remembered her. An alluring sort of girl, as most of them are. Her name was Venza. She spoke English well. A singer and dancer who had been imported to Great-New York to fill some theatrical engagement. She'd made quite a hit on the Great White Way.

She came up the incline, with the carrier ahead of her. Gazing up, she saw Dr. Frank and me at the turret window and waved her white arm in greeting. And flashed us a smile.

Dr. Frank laughed. "By the gods of the airways, there's Alta Venza! You saw that look, Gregg? That was for me, not you."

"Reasonable enough," I retorted. "But I doubt it—the Venza was nothing if not impartial."

I WONDERED what could be taking Venza now to Mars. I was glad to see her. She was diverting. Educated. Well-traveled. Spoke English with a colloquial, theatrical manner more characteristic of Great-New York than of Venus. And for all her light banter, I would rather put my trust in her than any Venus girl I had ever met.

The hum of the departing siren was sounding. Friends and relatives of the passengers were crowding the exit incline. The deck was clearing. I had not seen George Prince come aboard. And then I thought I saw him down on the landing stage, just arrived from a private tube-car. A small, slight figure. The customs men were around him: I could only see his head and shoulders. Pale, girlishly handsome face; long, black hair to the base of his neck. He was bare-headed, with the hood of his traveling-cloak pushed back.

I stared, and I saw that Dr. Frank was also gazing down. But neither of us spoke.

Then I said upon impulse, "Suppose we go down to the deck, Doctor?"

He acquiesced. We descended to the lower room of the turret and clambered down the spider ladder to the upper deck-level. The head of the arriving incline was near us. Preceded by two carriers who were littered with hand-baggage, George Prince was coming up the incline. He was closer now. I recognized him from the type we had seen in Halsey's office.

AND then, with a shock, I saw it was not so. This was a girl coming aboard. An arch-light over the incline showed her clearly when she was half way up. A girl with her hood pushed back; her face framed in thick black hair. I saw now it was not a man's cut of hair; but long braids coiled up under the dangling hood.

Dr. Frank must have remarked my amazed expression.

"Little beauty, isn't she?"

"Who is she?"

We were standing back against the

wall of the superstructure. A passenger was near us—the Martian whom Dr. Frank had called Miko. He was loitering here, quite evidently watching this girl come aboard. But as I glanced at him he looked away and casually sauntered off.

The girl came up and reached the deck. "I am in A 22," she told the carrier. "My brother came aboard two hours ago."

Dr. Frank answered my whisper. "That's Anita Prince."

She was passing quite close to us on the deck, following the carrier, when she stumbled and very nearly fell. I was nearest to her. I leaped forward and caught her as she went down.

"Oh!" she cried.

With my arm about her, I raised her up and set her upon her feet again. She had twisted her ankle. She balanced herself upon it. The pain of it eased up in a moment.

"I'm—all right—thank you!"

IN the dimness of the blue-lit deck, I met her eyes. I was holding her with my encircling arm. She was small and soft against me. Her face, framed in the thick, black hair, smiled up at me. Small, oval face—beautiful—yet firm of chin, and stamped with the mark of its own individuality. No empty-headed beauty, this.

"I'm all right, thank you very much—"

I became conscious that I had not released her. I felt her hands pushing at me. And then it seemed that for an instant she yielded and was clinging. And I met her startled, upflung gaze. Eyes like a purple night with the sheen of misty starlight in them.

I heard myself murmuring, "I beg your pardon. Yes, of course!" I released her.

She thanked me again and followed the carrier along the deck. She was limping slightly from the twisted ankle.

An instant, while she had clung to me—and I had held her. A brief flash of something, from her eyes to mine—from mine back to hers. The poets write that love can be born of such a glance. The first meeting, across all the barriers of which love springs unsought, unbidden—defiant, sometimes. And the troubadours of old would sing: "A fleeting glance; a touch; two wildly beating hearts—and love was born."

I think, with Anita and me, it must have been like that. . . .

I stood gazing after her, unconscious of Dr. Frank, who was watching me with his humorous smile. And presently, no more than a quarter beyond the zero hour, the Planetara got away. With the dome-windows battened tightly, we lifted from the landing stage and soared over the glowing city. The phosphorescence of the electronic tubes was like a comet's tail behind us as we slid upward.

At the trinight hour the heat of our atmospheric passage was over. The passengers had all retired. The ship was quiet, with empty decks and dim, silent corridors. Vibrationless, with the electronic engines cut off and only the hum of the Martel magnetizers to break the unnatural stillness. We were well beyond the earth's atmosphere, heading out in the cone-path of the earth's shadow, in the direction of the moon.

CHAPTER III

In the Helio-room

AT six A. M., earth Eastern time, which we were still carrying, Snap Dean and I were alone in his instrument room, perched in the network over the Planetara's deck. The bulge of the dome enclosed us; it rounded like a great observatory window some twenty feet above the ceiling of this little metal cubby-hole.

The Planetara was still in the earth's shadow. The firmament—black interstellar space with its blazing white, red and yellow stars—lay spread around us. The moon, with nearly all its disc illumined, hung, a great silver ball, over

our bow quarter. Behind it, to one side, Mars floated like the red tip of a smoldering cigarillo in the blackness. The earth, behind our stern, was dimly, redly visible—a giant sphere, etched with the configurations of its oceans and continents. Upon one limb a touch of the sunlight hung on the mountain-tops with a crescent red-yellow sheen.

And then we plunged from the cone-shadow. The sun, with the leaping Corona, burst through the blackness behind us. The earth lighted into a huge, thin crescent with hooked cusps.

To Snap and me, the glories of the heavens were too familiar to be remarked. And upon this voyage particularly we were in no mood to consider them. I had been in the helio-room several hours. When the Planetara started, and my few routine duties were over, I could think of nothing save Halsey's and Carter's admonition: "Be on your guard. And particularly—watch George Prince."

I had not seen George Prince. But I had seen his sister, whom Carter and Halsey had not bothered to mention. My heart was still pounding with the memory. . . .

WHEN the passengers had retired and the ship quieted, I prowled through the passenger corridors. This was about the trinight hour.* Hot as the corridors of hell, with our hull and the glassite dome seething with the friction of our atmospheric flight. But the refrigerators mitigated that; the ventilators blasted cold air from the renewers into every corner of the vessel. Within an hour or two, with the cold of space striking us, it was hot air that was needed.

Dr. Frank evidently was having little trouble with pressure-sick passengers**—the Planetara's equalizers were fairly efficient. I did not encounter Dr. Frank. I prowled through the silent metal lounges and passages. I went to the door of A 22. It was on the deck-level, in a tiny transverse passage just off the main lounging room. Its name-grid glowed with the letters: *Anita Prince.*" I stood in my short white trousers and white silk shirt, like a cabin steward gawping. Anita Prince! I had never heard the name until this night. But there was magic music in it now, as I murmured it to myself. Anita Prince. . . .

She was here, doubtless asleep, behind this small metal door. It seemed as though that little oval grid were the gateway to a fairyland of my dreams.

I turned away. And thought of the Grantline Moon Expedition stabbed at me. George Prince—Anita's brother—he whom I had been told to watch. This renegade—associate of dubious Martians, plotting God knows what.

I SAW, upon the adjoining door, "A 20, *George Prince.*" I listened. In the humming stillness of the ship's interior there was no sound from these cabins. A 20 was without windows, I knew. But Anita's room had a window and a door which gave upon the deck. I went through the lounge, out its arch, and walked the deck length. The deck door and window of A 22 were closed and dark.

The ten-foot-wide deck was dim with white starlight from the side ports. Chairs were here, but they were all empty. From the bow windows of the arching dome a flood of moonlight threw long, slanting shadows down the deck. At the corner where the superstructure ended, I thought I saw a figure lurking as though watching me. I went that way, but it vanished.

I turned the corner, went the width of the ship to the other side. There was no one in sight save the observer on his spider bridge, high in the bow network, and the second officer, on duty on the turret balcony almost directly over me.

*Trinight Hour, i.e., 3 A. M.

**Pressure sickness. Caused by the difficulty of maintaining a constantly normal air pressure within the vessel owing to the sudden, extreme changes from heat to cold.

As I stood and listened, I suddenly heard footsteps. From the direction of the bow a figure came. Purser Johnson.

He greeted me. "Cooling off, Gregg?"

"Yes," I said.

He went past me and turned into the smoking room door nearby.

I stood a moment at one of the deck windows, gazing at the stars; and for no reason at all I realized I was tense. Johnson was a great one for his regular sleep—it was wholly unlike him to be roaming about the ship at such an hour. Had he been watching me? I told myself it was nonsense. I was suspicious of everyone, everything, this voyage.

I HEARD another step. Captain Carter appeared from his chart-room which stood in the center of the narrowing open deck space near the bow. I joined him at once.

"Who was that?" he half-whispered.

"Johnson."

"Oh, yes." He fumbled in his uniform; his gaze swept the moonlit deck. "Gregg—take this." He handed me a small metal box. I stuffed it at once into my shirt.

"An insulator," he added, swiftly. "Snap is in his office. Take it to him, Gregg. Stay with him—you'll have a measure of security—and you can help him to make the photographs." He was barely whispering. "I won't be with you—no use making it look as though we were doing anything unusual. If your graphs show anything—or if Snap picks up any message—bring it to me." He added aloud, "Well, it will be cool enough presently, Gregg."

He sauntered away toward his chart-room.

"By heavens, what a relief!" Snap murmured as the current went on. We had wired his cubby with the insulator; within its barrage we could at last talk with a degree of freedom.

"You've seen George Prince, Gregg?"

"No. He's assigned A 20. But I saw his sister. Snap, no one ever mentioned—"

Snap had heard of her, but he hadn't known that she was listed for this voyage. "A real beauty, so I've heard. Accursed shame for a decent girl to have a brother like that."

I could agree with him there, but I made no comment.

IT was now 6 A. M. Snap had been busy all night with routine cosmoradios from the earth, following our departure. He had a pile of them beside him. Many were for the passengers; but anything that savored of a code was barred.

"Nothing queer looking?" I suggested.

"No. Not a thing."

We were at this time no more than some sixty-five thousand miles from the moon's surface. The Planetara presently would swing upon her direct course for Mars. There was nothing which could cause passenger comment in this close passing of the moon; normally we used the satellite's attraction to give us additional starting speed.

It was now or never that a message would come from Grantline. He was supposed to be upon this earthward side of the moon. While Snap had rushed through with his routine, I had searched the moon-surface with our glass, as I knew Carter was searching it—and also the observer in his tower, very possibly.

But there was nothing. Copernicus and Kepler lay in full sunlight. The heights of the lunar mountains, the depths of the barren, empty seas were etched black and white, clear and clean. Grim, forbidding desolation, this unchanging moon! In romance, moonlight may shimmer and sparkle to light a lover's smile; but the reality of the moon is cold and bleak. There was nothing to show my prying eyes where the intrepid Grantline might be.

"Nothing at all, Snap."

And Snap's helio mirrors, attuned for an hour now to pick up the faintest signal, were motionless.

"If he has concentrated any appre-

dable amount of radio-active ore," said Snap, "we should get an impulse from its Gamma rays."

BUT our receiving shield was dark, untouched. We tried taking hydrogen photographic impressions of the visible moon surface. A sequence of them, with stereoscopic lenses, forty-eight to the second. Our mirror-grid gave the magnified images; the spectro-heliograph, with its wave-length selection, pictured the mountain-levels, and slowly descended into the deepest seas.

There was nothing.

Yet in those moon caverns—a million million recesses amid the crags of that tumbled, barren surface—the pin-point of movement which might have been Grantline's expedition could so easily be hiding! Could he have the ore insulated, fearing its Gamma rays would betray its presence to hostile watchers?

Or might disaster have come to him? Or he might not be upon this hemisphere of the moon at all. . . .

My imagination, sharpened by fancy of a lurking menace which seemed everywhere about the Planetara this voyage, ran rife with fears for Johnny Grantline. He had promised to communicate this voyage. It was now, or perhaps never.

Six-thirty came and passed. We were well beyond the earth's shadow now. The firmament blazed with its vivid glories; the sun behind us was a ball of yellow-red leaping flames. The earth hung, opened to a huge, dull-red half-sphere.

WE were within some forty thousand miles of the moon. Giant white ball—all of its disc visible to the naked eye. It poised over the bow, and presently, as the Planetara swung upon her course for Mars, it shifted sidewise. The light of it glared white and dazzling in our tiny side windows.

Snap, with his habitual red celluloid eyeshade shoved high on his forehead, worked over our instruments.

"Gregg!"

The receiving shield was glowing a trifle! Gamma rays were bombarding it! It glowed, gleamed phosphorescent, and the audible recorder began sounding its tiny tinkling murmurs.

Gamma rays! Snap sprang to the dials. The direction and strength were soon obvious. A richly radio-active ore body, of considerable size, was concentrated upon this hemisphere of the moon! It was unmistakable.

"He's got it, Gregg! He's—"

The tiny helio mirrors began quivering. Snap exclaimed triumphantly, "Here he comes! By God, the message at last! Bar off that light!"

I FLUNG on the absorbers. The moonlight bathing the little room went into them and darkness sprang around us. Snap fumbled at his instrument board. Actinic light showed dimly in the quivering, thumbnail mirrors. Two of them. They hung poised on their cobweb wires, infinitely sensitive to the infra-red light-rays Grantline was sending from the moon. The mirrors in a moment began swinging. On the scale across the room the actinic beams from them were magnified into sweeps of light.

The message!

Snap spelled it out, decoded it.

"Success! Stop for ore on your return voyage. Will give you our location later. Success beyond wildest hopes—"

The mirrors hung motionless. The shield, where the Gamma rays were bombarding, went suddenly dark.

Snap murmured, "That's all. He's got the ore!' 'Success beyond wildest hopes.' That must mean an enormous quantity of it available!"

We were sitting in darkness, and abruptly I became aware that across our open window, where the insulation barrage was flung, the air was faintly hissing. An interference there! I saw a tiny swirl of purple sparks. Someone—some hostile ray from the deck beneath us, or from the spider bridge that

led to our little room—someone out there trying to pry in!

Snap impulsively reached for the absorbers to let in the outside light—it was all darkness to us outside. But I checked him.

"Wait!" I cut off our barrage, opened our door and stepped to the narrow metal bridge.

"Wait, Snap! You stay there." I added aloud, "Well, Snap, I'm going to bed. Glad you've cleaned up that batch of work."

I BANGED the door upon him. The lacework of metal bridges and ladders seemed empty. I gazed up to the dome, and forward and aft. Twenty feet beneath me was the metal roof of the cabin superstructure. Below it, both sides of the deck showed. All patched with moonlight.

No one visible down there. I descended a ladder. The deck was empty. But in the silence something was moving! Footsteps moving away from me down the deck! I followed; and suddenly I was running. Chasing something I could hear, but could not see! It turned into the smoking room.

I burst in. And a real sound smothered the phantom. Johnson the purser was sitting here alone in the dimness. He was smoking. I noticed that his cigar held a long, frail ash. It could not have been him I was chasing. He was sitting there quite calmly. A thick-necked, heavy fellow, easily out of breath. But he was breathing calmly now.

He sat up with amazement at my wild-eyed appearance, and the ash jarred from his cigar.

"Gregg! What in the devil—"

I tried to grin. "I'm on my way to bed—worked all night helping Snap with those damn Earth messages."

I went past him, out the door into the main interior corridor. It was the only way the invisible prowler could have gone. But I was too late now—I could hear nothing. I dashed forward into the main lounge. It was empty, dim and silent, a silence broken presently by a faint click—a stateroom door hastily closing. I swung and found myself in a tiny transverse passage. The twin doors of A 22 and A 20 were before me.

The invisible eavesdropper had gone into one of these rooms! I listened at each of the panels, but there was only silence within.

The interior of the ship was suddenly singing with the steward's siren—the call to awaken the passengers. It startled me. I moved swiftly away. But as the siren shut off, in the silence I heard a soft, musical voice:

"Wake up, Anita—I think that's the breakfast call."

And her answer: "All right, George. I hear it."

CHAPTER IV

A Burn on a Martian Arm

I DID not appear at that morning meal. I was exhausted and drugged with lack of sleep. I had a moment with Snap, to tell him what had occurred. Then I sought out Carter. He had his little chart-room insulated. And we were cautious. I told him what Snap and I had learned: the Gamma rays from the moon, proving that Grantline had concentrated a considerable ore-body. I also told him the message from Grantline.

"We'll stop on the way back, as he directs, Gregg." He bent closer to me. "At Ferrok-Shahn I'm going to bring back a cordon of Interplanetary Police. The secret will be out, of course, when once we stop at the moon. We have no right, even now, to be flying this vessel as unguarded as it is."

He was very solemn. And he was grim when I told him of the invisible eavesdropper.

"You think he overheard Grantline's message?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Who was it? You seem to feel it was George Prince?"

"Yes."

I was convinced that the prowler had gone into A 20. When I mentioned the purser, who seemed to have been watching me earlier in the night, and again was sitting in the smoking room when the eavesdroopper fled past, Carter looked startled.

"Johnson is all right, Gregg."

"Is he? Does he know anything about this Grantline affair?"

"No—no," said the captain hastily. "You haven't mentioned it, have you?"

"Of course I haven't. I've been wondering why Johnson didn't hear that eavesdropper. I could hear him when I was chasing him. But Johnson sat perfectly unmoved and let him go by. What was he sitting there for, anyway, at that hour of the morning?"

"You're too suspicious, Gregg. Overwrought. But you're right—we can't be too careful. I'm going to have that Prince suite searched when I catch it unoccupied. Passengers don't ordinarily travel with invisible cloaks. Go to bed, Gregg—you need a rest."

I WENT to my cabin. It was located aft, on the stern deck-space, near the stern watch-tower. A small metal room, with a desk, a chair and bunk. I made sure no one was in it. I sealed the lattice grill and the door, set the alarm trigger against any opening of them, and went to bed.

The siren for the mid-day meal awakened me. I had slept heavily. I felt refreshed. And hungry.

I found the passengers already assembled at my table when I arrived in the dining salon. It was a low-vaulted metal room of blue and yellow tube lights. At the sides its oval windows showed the deck, with its ports of the dome-side, through which a vista of the starry firmament was visible. We were well on our course to Mars. The moon had dwindled to a pin-point of light beside the crescent earth. And behind them our sun blazed, visually the largest orb in the heavens. It was some sixty-eight million miles from the earth to Mars, this voyage. A flight, under ordinary circumstances, of some ten days.

There were five tables in the dining salon, each with eight seats. Snap and I had one of the tables. We sat at the ends, with three passengers on each of the sides.

Snap was in his seat when I arrived. He eyed me down the length of the table.

"Good morning, Gregg. We missed you at breakfast. Not pressure-sick, I hope?"

There were three passengers already seated at our table—all men. Snap, in a gay mood, introduced me.

"This is our third officer, Gregg Haljan. Big, handsome fellow, isn't he? And as pleasant as he is good-looking. Gregg, this is Sero Ob Hahn."

I MET the keen, dark-eyed somber gaze of a Venus man of middle age. A small, slim, graceful man, with sleek black hair. His pointed face, accentuated by the pointed beard, was pallid. He wore a white and purple robe; upon his breast was a huge platinum ornament, a device like a star and cross entwined.

"I am happy to meet you, sir." His voice was soft and sleek.

"Ob Hahn," I repeated. "I should have heard of you, no doubt. But—"

A smile plucked at his thin, gray lips. "That is the error of mine, not yours. My mission is that all the universe shall hear of me."

"He's preaching the religion of the Venus Mystics," Snap explained.

"And this enlightened gentleman," said Ob Hahn ironically, "has just termed it fetishism. The ignorance—"

"Oh, I say!" protested the man at Ob Hahn's side. "I mean, you seem to think I intended something opprobrious. As a matter of fact—"

"We've an argument, Gregg," laughed Snap. "This is Sir Arthur Coniston, an English gentleman, lecturer and sky-trotter—that is, he will be a sky-trotter; he tells us he plans a number of voyages."

The tall Englishman in his white linen suit bowed acknowledgment. "My compliments, Mr. Haljan. I hope you have no strong religious convictions, else we will make your table here very miserable!"

THE third passenger had evidently kept out of the argument. Snap introduced him as Rance Rankin. An American—a quiet, blond fellow of thirty-five or forty.

I ordered my breakfast and let the argument go on.

"Won't make me miserable," said Snap. "I love an argument. You said, Sir Arthur?

"I mean to say, I think I said too much. Mr. Rankin, you are more diplomatic."

Rankin laughed. "I am a magician," he said to me. "A theatrical entertainer. I deal in tricks—how to fool an audience—" His keen, amused gaze was on Ob Hahn. "This gentleman from Venus and I have too much in common to argue."

"A nasty one!" the Englishman exclaimed. "By Jove! Really, Mr. Rankin, you're a bit too cruel!"

I could see we were doomed to have turbulent meals this voyage. I like to eat in quiet; arguing passengers always annoy me. There were still three seats vacant at our table; I wondered who would occupy them. I soon learned the answer—for one seat at least. Rankin said calmly:

"Where is the little Venus girl this meal?" His glance went to the empty seat at my right hand. "The Venza—wasn't that her name? She and I are destined for the same theater in Ferrok-Shahn."

So Venza was to sit beside me. It was good news. Ten days of a religious argument three times a day would be intolerable. But the cheerful Venza would help.

"She never eats the mid-day meal," said Snap. "She's on the deck, having orange juice. I guess it's the old gag about diet, eh?"

MY attention wandered about the salon. Most of the seats were occupied. At the captain's table I saw the objects of my search. George Prince and his sister sat one on each side of the captain. I saw George Prince in the life now as a man who looked hardly twenty-five. He was at this moment evidently in a gay mood. His clean-cut, handsome profile, with its poetic dark curls, was turned toward me. There seemed little of the villain about him.

And I saw Anita Prince now as a dark-haired, black eyed little beauty, in feature resembling her brother very strongly. She presently finished her meal. She rose, with him after her. She was dressed in Earth fashion—white blouse and dark jacket, wide, knee-length trousers of gray, with a red sash her only touch of color. She went past me, flashed me her smile and nod.

My heart was pounding. I answered her greeting, and met George Prince's casual gaze. He, too, smiled, as though to signify that his sister had told him of the service I had done her. Or was his smile an ironical memory of how he had eluded me this morning when I chased him?

I gazed after his small, white-suited figure as he followed Anita from the salon. And thinking of her, I prayed that Carter and Halsey might be wrong. Whatever plotting against the Grant-line Expedition might be going on, I hoped that George Prince was innocent of it. Yet I knew in my heart it was a futile hope. Prince had been that eavesdropper outside the helio-room. I could not really doubt it. But that his sister must be ignorant of what he was doing, I was sure.

MY attention was brought suddenly back to the reality of our table. I heard Ob Hahn's silky voice:

"We passed quite close to the moon last night, Mr. Dean."

"Yes," said Snap. "We did, didn't we? Always do—it's a technical prob-

lem of the exigencies of inter-stellar navigation. Explain it to them, Gregg—you're an expert."

I waved it away with a laugh. There was a brief silence. I could not help noticing Sir Arthur Coniston's queer look, and I think I have never seen so keen a glance as Rance Rankin shot at me. Were all these people aware of Grantline's treasure on the moon? It suddenly seemed so. I wished fervently at that instant that the ten days of this voyage were over and we were safely at Ferrok-Shahn. Captain Carter was absolutely right. Coming back we would have a cordon of interplanetary police aboard.

Sir Arthur broke the awkward silence. "Magnificent sight, the moon, from so close a viewpoint—though I was too much afraid of pressure-sickness to be up to see it."

I HAD nearly finished my hasty meal when another incident shocked me. The two other passengers at our table came in and took their seats. A Martian girl and man. The girl had the seat at my left, with the man beside her. All Martians are tall. This girl was about my own height—that is, six feet, two inches. The man was seven feet or more. Both wore the Martian outer robe. The girl flung hers back. Her limbs were encased in pseudo-mail. She looked, as all Martians like to look, a very warlike Amazon. But she was a pretty girl. She smiled at me with a keen-eyed, direct gaze.

"Mr. Dean said at breakfast that you were big and handsome. You are."

They were brother and sister, these Martians. Snap introduced them as Set Miko and Setta Moa.*

This Miko was, from our Earth standards, a tremendous, brawny giant. Not spindly, like most Martians, this fellow, for all his seven feet of height, was almost heavy-set. He wore a plaited leather jerkin beneath his robe, and knee pants of leather out of which his lower legs showed as gray, hairy pillars of strength. He had come into the salon with a swagger, his sword-ornament clanking.

"A pleasant voyage so far," he said to me as he started his meal. His voice had the heavy, throaty rasp characteristic of the Martian. He spoke perfect English—both Martians and Venus people are by heritage extraordinary linquists. Miko and his sister Moa had a touch of Martian accent, worn almost away by living for some years in Great-New York.

The shock to me came within a few minutes. Miko, absorbed in attacking his meal, inadvertently pushed back his robe to bare his forearm. An instant only, then it dropped again to his wrist. But in that instant I had seen, upon the gray flesh, a thin scar turned red. A very recent burn—as though a pencil-ray of heat had caught his arm.

My mind flung back. Only last night in the City Corridor, Snap and I had been followed by a Martian. I had shot at him with the heat-ray; I thought I had hit him on the arm. Was this the mysterious Martian who had followed us from Halsey's office?

CHAPTER V

Venza the Venus Girl

IT WAS shortly after that mid-day meal when I encountered Venza sitting on the starlit deck. I had been in the bow observatory; taken my routine castings of our position and worked them out. I was, I think, of the Planctara's officers the most expert handler of the mathematical mechanical calculators. The locating of our position and charting the trajectory of our course was, under ordinary circumstances, about all I had to do. And it took only a few minutes each twelve hours.

I had a moment with Carter in the isolation of his chart-room.

"This voyage! Gregg, I'm getting like you—too fanciful. We've a normal

* "Set and Setta," the Martian equivalent of Mr. and Miss.

group of passengers, apparently; but I don't like the look of any of them. That Ob Hahn, at your table—"

"Snaky-looking fellow," I commented. "He and the Englishman are great on arguments. Did you have Prince's cabin searched?

My breath hung on his answer.

"Yes. Nothing unusual among his things. We searched both his room and his sister's."

I did not follow that up. Instead I told him about the burn on Miko's thick gray arm.

HE stared. "I wish to the Almighty we were at Ferrok-Shahn. Gregg, to-night when the passengers are asleep, come here to me. Snap will be here, and Dr. Frank. We can trust him."

"He knows about—about the Grantline treasure?"

"Yes. And so do Balch and Blackstone."

Balch and Blackstone were our first and second officers.

"We'll all meet here, Gregg—say about the zero hour. We must take some precautions."

He suddenly felt he should say no more now. He dismissed me.

I found Venza seated alone in a secluded corner of the starlit deck. A porthole, with the black heavens and the blazing stars, was before her. There was an empty seat nearby.

"Hola-lo,* Gregg! Sit here with me. I have been wondering when you would come after me."

I sat down beside her. "What are you doing—going to Mars, Venza? I'm glad to see you."

"Many thanks. But I am glad to see you, Gregg. So handsome a man. . . Do you know, from Venus to the earth and I have no doubt on all of Mars, no man will please me more."

"Glib tongue," I laughed. "Born to flatter the male—every girl of your world." And I added seriously, "You don't answer my question? What takes you to Mars?"

"Contract. By the stars, what else? Of course, a chance to make a voyage with you—"

"Don't be silly, Venza."

I ENJOYED her. I gazed at her small, slim figure gracefully reclining in the deck chair. Her long, gray robe parted—by design, I have no doubt—to display her shapely, satin-sheathed legs. Her black hair was coiled in a heavy knot at the back of her neck; her carmined lips were parted with a mocking, alluring smile. The exotic perfume of her enveloped me.

She glanced at me sidewise from beneath her sweeping black lashes.

"Be serious," I added.

"I am serious. Sober. Intoxicated by you, but sober."

I said, "What sort of a contract?"

"A theater in Ferrok-Shahn. Good money, Gregg. I'm to be there a year." She sat up to face me. "There's a fellow here on the Planetara, Rance Rankin, he calls himself. At our table—a big, good-looking blond American. He says he is a magician. Ever hear of him?"

"That's what he told me. No, I never heard of him."

"Nor did I. And I thought I had heard of everyone of any importance. He is listed for the same theater where I'm going. Nice sort of fellow." She paused, and added suddenly, "If he's a professional entertainer, I'm a motor-oiler."

IT startled me. "Why do you say that?"

Instinctively my gaze swept the deck. An Earth woman and child and a small Venus man were in sight, but not within earshot.

"Why do you look so furtive?" she retorted. "Gregg, there's something strange about this voyage. I'm no fool, nor you, and you know it as well as I do."

*A Venus form of jocular, intimate greeting.

"Rance Rankin—" I prompted.

She leaned closer toward me. "He could fool you. But not me—I've known too many real magicians." She grinned. "I challenged him to trick me. You should have seen him trying to evade!"

"Do you know Ob Hahn?" I interrupted.

She shook her head. "Never heard of him. But he told me plenty at breakfast. By Satan, what a flow of words that devil-driver can muster! He and the Englishman don't mesh very well, do they?"

She stared at me. I had not answered her grin; my mind was too busy with queer fancies. Halsey's words: "Things are not always what they seem—" Were these passengers masqueraders? Put here by George Prince? And then I thought of Miko the Martian, and the burn upon his arm.

"Come back, Gregg! Don't go wandering off like that!" She dropped her voice to a whisper. "I'll be serious. I want to know what in the hell is going on aboard this ship. I'm a woman, and I'm curious. You tell me."

"WHAT do you mean?" I parried.

"I mean a lot of things. What we've just been talking about. And what was the excitement you were in just before breakfast this morning?"

"Excitement?"

"Gregg, you may trust me." For the first time she was wholly serious. Her gaze made sure no one was within hearing. She put her hand on my arm. I could barely hear her whisper: "I know they might have a ray upon us—I'll be careful."

"They?"

"Anyone. Something's going on. You know it—you are in it. I saw you this morning, Gregg. Wild-eyed, chasing a phantom—"

"You?"

"And I heard the phantom! A man's footsteps. A magnetic reflecting invisible cloak. You couldn't fool an audience with that—it's too commonplace. If Rance Rankin tried—"

I gripped her. "Don't ramble, Venza! You saw me?"

"Yes. My stateroom door was open. I was sitting with a cigarillo. I saw the purser in the smoking room. He was visible from—"

"Wait! Venza, that prowler went through the smoking room!"

"I know he did. I could hear him."

"Did the purser hear him?"

"Of course. The purser looked up, followed the sound with his gaze. I thought that was queer. He never made a move. And then you came along and he acted innocent. Why? What's going on, that's what I want to know!"

I HELD my breath. "Venza, where did the prowler run to? Can you—"

She whispered calmly, "Into A 20. I saw the door open and close—I even think I could see the blurred outline of him. Those magnetic cloaks!" She added, "Why should George Prince be sneaking around with you after him? And the purser acting innocent? And who is this George Prince, anyway?"

The huge Martian, Miko, with his sister Moa came strolling along the deck. They nodded as they passed us.

I whispered, "I can't explain anything now. But you're right, Venza: there is something going on. Listen! Whatever you learn—anything you encounter which looks unusual—will you tell me? I—well, I do trust you—really I do!—but the thing isn't mine to tell."

The somber pools of her eyes were shining. "You are very lovable, Gregg. I won't question you." She was trembling with excitement. "Whatever it is, I want to be in it. Here's something I can tell you now. We've two high-class gold-leaf gamblers aboard. Did you know that?"

"No. Who are—"

"Shac and Dud Ardley. Let me state every detective in Great New York knows them. They had a wonderful game with that Englishman, Sir Arthur Coniston, this morning. Stripped him,

of half a pound of eight-inch leaves—a neat little stack. A crooked game, of course. Those fellows are more nimble-fingered than Rance Rankin ever dared to be!"

I SAT staring at her. She was a mine of information, this girl.

"And Gregg, I tried my charms on Shac and Dud. Nice men, but dumb. Whatever's going on, they're not in it. They wanted to know what kind of a ship this was. Why? Because Shac has a cute little eavesdropping microphone of his own. He had it working in the night last night. He overheard George Prince and that big giant Miko arguing about the moon!"

I gasped. "Venza, softer!"

Against all propriety of this public deck she pretended to drape herself upon me. Her hair smothered my face as her lips almost touched my ear.

"Something about treasure on the moon—Shac couldn't understand what. And they mentioned you. He didn't hear what they said because the purser joined them." Her whispered words tumbled over one another. "A hundred pounds of gold leaf—that's the purser's price. He's with them, whatever it is. He promised to do something for them."

She stopped. "Well?" I prompted.

"That's all. Shac's current was interrupted."

"Tell him to try it again, Venza! I'll talk with him. No! I'd better let him alone. Can you get him to keep his mouth shut?"

"I think he might do anything I told him. He's a man."

"Find out what you can."

She sat away from me suddenly. "There's Anita and George Prince."

THEY came to the corner of the deck, but turned back. Venza caught my look. And understood it.

"So you love Anita Prince so much as that, Gregg?" Venza was smiling. "I wish you—I wish some man handsome as you would gaze after me like that."

She turned solemn. "You may be interested to know that she loves you. I could see it. I knew it when I mentioned you to her this morning."

"Me? Why, we've hardly spoken!"

"Is it necessary? I never heard that it was."

I could not see Venza's face; she stood up suddenly. And when I rose beside her, she whispered,

"We should not be seen talking so long. I'll find out what I can."

I stared after her slight robed figure as she turned into the lounge archway and vanished.

CHAPTER VI

A Traitor, and a Passing Asteroid

CAPTAIN CARTER was grim. "So they've bought him off, have they? Go bring him in here, Gregg. We'll have it out with him now."

Snap, Dr. Frank, Balch, our first officer, and I were in the captain's chart-room. It was 4 P. M.—our Earth starting time. We were sixteen hours upon our voyage.

I found Johnson in his office in the lounge. "Captain wants to see you. Close up."

He closed his window upon an American woman passenger who was demanding details of Martian currency, and followed me forward. "What is it, Gregg?"

"I don't know."

Captain Carter banged the slide upon us. The chart-room was insulated. The hum of the current was obvious. Johnson noticed it. He started at the hostile faces of the surgeon and Balch. And he tried to bluster.

"What is this? Something wrong?"

Carter wasted no words. "We have information, Johnson — there's some under cover plot here aboard. I want to know what it is. Suppose you tell us frankly."

THE purser looked blank. "What do you mean? We've gamblers aboard, if that's—"

"To hell with that," growled Balch. "You had a secret interview with that Martian, Set Miko, and with George Prince!"

Johnson scowled from under his heavy brows, and then raised them in surprise.

"Did I? You mean changing their money? I don't like your tone, Balch. I'm not your under-officer!"

"But you're under me," roared the captain. "By God, I'm master here!"

"Well, I'm not disputing that," said the purser mildly. "This fellow Balch—"

"We're in no mood for argument," Dr. Frank cut in. "Clouding the issue."

"I won't let it be clouded," the captain exclaimed. I had never seen Carter so choleric. He was evidently under a tremendous strain. He added,

"Johnson, you've been acting suspiciously. I don't give a damn whether I've proof of it or not—I say it. Did you, or did you not meet George Prince and that Martian last night?"

"No, I did not. And I don't mind telling you, Captain Carter, that your tone also is offensive!"

"Is it?" Carter suddenly seized him. They were both big men. Johnson's heavy face went purplish red.

"Take your hands!—" They were struggling. Carter's hands were fumbling at the purser's pockets. I leaped, flung an arm around Johnson's neck, pinning him.

"Easy there! We've got you, Johnson!"

SNAP tried to help me. "Go on, bang him on the head, Gregg. Now's your chance!"

We searched him. A heat-ray cylinder—that was legitimate. But we found a small battery and eavesdropping microphone similar to the one Venza had mentioned that Shac the gambler was carrying.

"What are you doing with that?" the captain demanded.

"None of your business! Is it criminal? Carter, I'll have the Line officials dismiss you for this! Take your hands off me, all of you!"

"Look at this!" exclaimed Dr. Frank.

From Johnson's breast pocket the surgeon drew a folded document. It was the scale drawing of the Planetara's interior corridors, the lower control rooms and mechanisms. It was always kept in Johnson's safe. And with it, another document: the ship's clearance papers — the secret code passwords for this voyage, to be used if we should be challenged by any interplanetary police ship.

Snap gasped. "My God, that was in my helio-room strong box! I'm the only one on this vessel except the captain who's entitled to know those passwords!"

Out of the silence, Balch demanded, "Well, what about it, Johnson?"

The purser was still defiant. "I won't answer your questions, Balch. At the proper time, I'll explain—Gregg Haljan, you're choking me!"

I EASED up. But I shook him. "You'd better talk."

He was exasperatingly silent.

"Enough!" exploded Carter. "He can explain when we get to port. Meanwhile I'll put him where he'll do no more damage. Gregg, lock him in the cage."

We ignored his violent protestations. The cage— in the old days of sea-vessels on Earth, they called it the brig—was the ship's jail. A steel-lined, windowless room located under the deck in the peak of the bow. I dragged the struggling Johnson there, with the amazed watcher looking down from the observatory window at our lunging, starlit forms.

"Shut up, Johnson! If you know what's good for you—"

He was making a fearful commotion. Behind us, where the deck narrowed at the superstructure, half a dozen passengers were gazing in surprise.

"I'll have you thrown out of the Service, Gregg Haljan!"

I shut him up finally. And flung him

down the ladder into the cage and sealed the deck trap-door upon him. I was headed back for the chart-room when from the observatory came the lookout's voice.

"An asteroid, Haljan! Officer Blackstone wants you."

I hurried to the turret bridge. An asteroid was in sight. We had attained nearly our maximum speed now. An asteroid was approaching, so dangerously close that our trajectory would have to be altered. I heard Blackstone's signals ringing in the control rooms; and met Carter as he ran to the bridge with me.

"That scoundrel! We'll get more out of him, Gregg. By God, I'll put the chemicals on him—torture him, illegal or not!"

WE had no time for further discussion. The asteroid was rapidly approaching. Already, under the glass, it was a magnificent sight. I had never seen this tiny world before—asteroids are not numerous between the Earth and Mars, or in toward Venus. I never expected to see this one again. How little of the future can we humans fathom, for all our science! If I could only have looked into the future, even for a few short hours! How different then would have been the outcome of this tragic voyage!

The asteroid came rushing at us. Its orbital velocity, I later computed, was some twenty-two miles a second. Our own, at the present maximum, was a fraction over seventy-seven. The asteroid had for some time been under observation by the lookout. He gave his warning only when it seemed that our trajectory should be altered to avoid a dangerously close passing.

At the combined speeds of nearly a hundred miles a second the asteroid swept into view. With the naked eye, at first it was a tiny speck of star-dust, unnoticed in the gem-strewn black velvet of Space. A speck. Then a gleaming dot, silver white, with the light of our Sun upon it.

Five minutes. The dot grew to a disc. Expanding. A full moon, silver white. Brightest world in the firmament—the light from it bathed the Planetara, illumined the deck, painting everything with silver.

I stood with Carter and Blackstone on the turret-bridge. It was obvious that unless we altered our course, the asteroid would pass too close for safety. Already we were feeling its attraction; from the control rooms came the report that our trajectory was disturbed by this new mass so near.

"Better make your calculations now, Gregg," Blackstone suggested.

I CAST up the rough elements from the observational instruments in the turret. It took me some ten or fifteen minutes. When I had us upon our new course, with the attractive and repulsive plates in the Planetara's hull set in their altered combinations, I went out to the bridge again.

The asteroid hung over our bow quarter. No more than twenty or thirty thousand miles away. A giant ball now, filling all that quadrant of the heavens. The configurations of its mountains—its land and water areas—were plainly visible. Its axial rotation was apparent.

"Perfectly habitable," Blackstone said. "But I've searched all over this hemisphere with the glass. No sign of human life—certainly nothing civilized—nothing in the fashion of cities."

A fair little world, by the look of it. A tiny globe: Blackstone had figured it at some eight hundred miles in diameter. There seemed a normal atmosphere. We could see areas where the surface was obscured by clouds. And oceans, and land masses. Polar ice-caps. Lush vegetation at its equator.

Blackstone had roughly cast its orbital elements. A narrow elipse. No wonder we had never encountered this fair little world before. It had come from the outer region beyond Neptune. At perihelion it would reach inside Mercury, round the Sun, and head outward again.

WE swept past the asteroid at a distance of some six thousand miles. Close enough, in very truth—a minute of flight at our combined speeds totaling a hundred miles a second. I had descended to the passenger deck, where I stood alone at a window, gazing.

The passengers were all gathered to view the passing little world. I saw, not far from me, Anita, standing with her brother; and the giant figure of Miko with them.

Half an hour since, first with the naked eye, this wandering little world had shown itself; it swam slowly past, began to dwindle behind us. A huge half moon. A thinner, smaller quadrant. A tiny crescent, like a silver bar-pin to adorn some lady's breast. And then it was a dot, a point of light indistinguishable among the myriad others hovering in this great black void.

The incident of the passing of the asteroid was over. I turned from the deck window. My heart leaped. The moment for which all day I had been subconsciously longing was at hand. Anita was sitting in a deck chair, momentarily alone. Her gaze was on me as I looked her way, and she smiled an invitation for me to join her.

CHAPTER VII

Unspoken Love

UNSPOKEN love! I think if I had yielded to the impulse of my heart, I would have poured out all those protestations of a lover's ecstasy, incongruous here upon this starlit public deck, to a girl I hardly knew. I think, too, she might have received them with a tender acquiescence. The starlight was mirrored in her dark eyes. Misty eyes, with great reaches of unfathomable space in their depths. Yet I felt their tenderness.

Unfathomable strangeness of love! Who am I to write of it, with all the poets of all the ages striving to express the unexpressible? A bond, strangely fashioned by nature. Between me and this little dark-haired Earth beauty. As though marked by the stars we were destined to be lovers. . . .

Thus ran the romance of my unspoken thoughts. But I was sitting quietly in the deck chair, striving to regard her gentle beauty impersonally. And saying:

"But Miss Prince, why are you and your brother going to Ferrok-Shahn? His business—"

Even as I voiced it, I hated myself for such a question. So nimble is the human mind that mingled with my rhapsodies of love was my need for information of George Prince. . . .

"Oh," she said, "this is pleasure, not business, for George." It seemed to me that a shadow crossed her expressive face. But it was gone in an instant, and she smiled. "We have always wanted to travel. We are alone in the world, you know—our parents died when we were children."

I FILLED in her pause. "You will like Mars—so many interesting things to see."

She nodded. "Yes, I understand so. Our Earth is so much the same all over, cast all in one mould."

"But a hundred or two hundred years ago it was not, Miss Prince. I have read how the picturesque Orient, differing from—well, Great-New York, or London, for instance—"

"Transportation did that," she interrupted eagerly. "Made everything the same—the people all look alike—dress alike."

We discussed it. She had an alert, eager mind, childlike with its curiosity, yet strangely matured. And her manner was naively earnest. Yet this was no clinging vine, this little Anita Prince. There was a firmness, a hint of masculine strength in her chin, and in her manner.

"If I were a man, what wonders I could achieve in this marvelous age!" Her sense of humor made her laugh at herself. "Easy for a girl to say that," she added.

"You have greater wonders to achieve, Miss Prince," I said impulsively.

"Yes? What are they?" She had a very frank and level gaze, devoid of coquetry.

My heart was pounding. "The wonders of the next generation. A little son, cast in your own gentle image—"

What madness, this clumsy brash talk! I choked it off.

BUT she took no offense. The dark rose-petals of her cheeks were mantled deeper red, but she laughed.

"That is true." She turned abruptly serious. "I should not laugh. The wonders of the next generation—conquering humans marching on. . ." Her voice trailed away. My hand went to her arm. Strange tingling something which poets call love! It burned and surged from my trembling fingers into the flesh of her forearm.

The starlight glowed in her eyes. She seemed to be gazing, not at the silver-lit deck, but away into distant reaches of the future. And she murmured:

"A little son, cast in my own gentle image. But with the strength of his father. . ."

Our moment. Just a breathless moment given us as we sat there with my hand burning her arm, as though we both might be seeing ourselves joined in a new individual—a little son, cast in his mother's gentle image and with the strength of his father. Our moment, and then it was over. A step sounded. I sat back. The giant gray figure of Miko came past, his great cloak swaying, with his clanking sword-ornament beneath it. His bullet head, with its close-clipped hair, was hatless. He gazed at us, swaggered past, and turned the deck corner.

Our moment was gone. Anita said conventionally, "It has been pleasant to talk with you, Mr. Haljan."

"But we'll have many more," I said. "Ten days—"

"You think we'll reach Ferrok-Shahn on schedule?"

"Yes. I think so. . . . As I was saying, Miss Prince, you'll enjoy Mars. A strange, aggressively forward-looking people."

AN oppression seemed on her. She stirred in her chair.

"Yes, they are," she said vaguely. "My brother and I know many Martians in Great-New York." She checked herself abruptly. Was she sorry she had said that? It seemed so.

Miko was coming back. He stopped this time before us.

"Your brother would see you, Anita. He sent me to bring you to his room."

The glance he shot me had a touch of insolence. I stood up, and he towered a head over me.

Anita said, "Oh yes. I'll come."

I bowed. "I will see you again, Miss Prince. I thank you for a pleasant half-hour."

The Martian led her away. Her little figure was like a child with a giant. It seemed, as they passed the length of the deck with me staring after them, that he took her arm roughly. And that she shrank from him in fear.

And they did not go inside. As though to show me that he had merely taken her from me, he stopped at a distant deck window and stood talking to her. Once he picked her up as one would pick up a child to show it some distant object through the window.

"A little son with the strength of his father. . . ." Her words echoed in my mind. Was Anita afraid of this Martian's wooing? Yet held to him by some power he might have over her brother? The vagrant thought struck me.

Was it that?

CHAPTER VIII

A Scream in the Night

WE kept, on the Planetara, always the time and routine of our port of departure. The rest of that afternoon and evening were a blank of confusion to me; Anita's words; the touch of my hand upon her arm; that

vast realm of what might be for us, like a glimpse of a magic land of happiness which I had seen in her eyes, and perhaps she had seen in mine—all this surged within me.

I wandered about the vessel. I was not hungry. I did not go to the dining salon for dinner. I carried Johnson food and water to his cage; and sat, with my heat-cylinder upon him, listening to his threats of what would happen when he could complain to the Line's higher officials.

But what was Johnson doing carrying a plan of the ship's control rooms in his pockets? And worse: How had he dared open Snap's box in the helio-room and abstract the code pass-words for this voyage? Without them we would be an outlawed vessel, subject to arrest if any patrol hailed us. Had Johnson been planning to sell those pass-words to Miko? I thought so. I tried to get the confession out of him, but could not.

I had a brief consultation with Captain Carter. He was genuinely apprehensive now. The Planetara carried no long-range guns, and very few side-arms. A half-dozen of the heat-ray hand projectors; a few old-fashioned weapons of explosion-rifles and automatic revolvers. And hand projectors with the new Benson curve-light. We had models of this for curved vision, so that one might see around a corner, so to speak. And with them, we could project the heat-ray in a curve as well.

THE weapons were all in Carter's chart room, save the few we officers always carried. Carter was apprehensive, but of what he could not say. He had not thought that our plan to stop at the Moon for treasure could affect this outward voyage. Any danger would be upon the way back, when the Planetara would be adequately guarded with long-range electronic guns, and manned with police-soldiers.

But now we were practically defenseless. . . .

I had a moment with Venza, but she had nothing new to communicate to me.

And for half an hour I chatted with George Prince. He seemed a gay, pleasant young man. I could almost have fancied I liked him. Or was it because he was Anita's brother? He told me how he looked forward to traveling with her on Mars. No, he had never been there before, he said.

He had a measure of Anita's earnest naive personality. Or was he a very clever scoundrel, with irony lurking in his soft voice, and a chuckle that he could so befool me?

"We'll talk again, Haljah. You interest me—I've enjoyed it."

He sauntered away from me, joining the saturnine Ob Hahn, with whom presently I heard him discussing religion.

The arrest of Johnson had caused considerable comment among the passengers. A few had seen me drag him forward to the cage. The incident had been the subject of passenger discussion all afternoon. Captain Carter had posted a notice to the effect that Johnson's accounts had been found in serious error, and that Dr. Frank for this voyage would act in his stead.

IT was near midnight when Snap and I closed and sealed the helio-room and started for the chart-room, where we were to meet with Captain Carter and the other officers. The passengers had nearly all retired. A game was in progress in the smoking room, but the deck was almost deserted.

Snap and I were passing along one of the interior corridors. The state-room doors, with the illumined names of the passengers, were all closed. The metal grid of the floor echoed our footsteps. Snap was in advance of me. His body suddenly rose in the air. He went like a balloon to the ceiling, struck it gently, and all in a heap came floating down and landed on the floor!

"What in the infernal!—"

He was laughing as he picked himself up. But it was a brief laugh. We knew what had happened: the artificial

gravity-controls in the base of the ship, which by magnetic force gave us normality aboard, were being tampered with. For just this instant, this particular small section of this corridor had been cut off. The slight bulk of the Planetara, floating in space, had no appreciable gravity pull on Snap's body, and the impulse of his step as he came to the unmagnetized area of the corridor had thrown him to the ceiling. The area was normal now. Snap and I tested it gingerly.

He gripped me. "That never went wrong by accident, Gregg! Someone down there—"

WE rushed to the nearest descending ladder. In the deserted lower room the bank of dials stood neglected. A score of dials and switches were here, governing the magnetism of different areas of the ship. There should have been a night operator, but he was gone.

Then we saw him lying nearby, sprawled face down on the floor! In the silence and dim lurid glow of the fluorescent tubes, we stood holding our breaths, peering and listening. No one here.

The guard was not dead. He lay unconscious from a blow on the head. A brawny fellow. We had him revived in a few moments. A broadcast flash of the call-buzz brought Dr. Frank in haste from the chart-room.

"What's the matter?"

We pointed at the unconscious man. "Someone was here," I said hastily. "Experimenting with the magnetic switches. Evidently unfamiliar with them—pulling one or another to test their workings and so see the reactions on the dials."

We told him what had happened to Snap in the upper corridor.

Dr. Frank revived the guard in a moment. He was no worse off for the episode, save a lump on his head, and a nasty headache.

But he had little to tell us. He had heard a step. Saw nothing—and then had been struck on the head, by some invisible assailant.

WE left him nursing his head, sitting belligerent at his post. Armed now with my heat-ray cylinder which I loaned him.

"Strange doings this voyage," he told us. "All the crew knows it—all been talkin' about it. I stick it out now, but when we get back home I'm done with this star travelin'. I belong on the sea anyway. A good old freighter is all right for me."

We hurried back to the upper level. We would indeed have to plan something at this chart-room conference. This was the first tangible attack our adversaries had made.

We were on the passenger deck headed for the chart room when all three of us stopped short, frozen with horror. Through the silent passenger quarters a scream rang out! A girl's shuddering, gasping scream. Terror in it. Horror. Or a scream of agony. In the silence of the dully vibrating ship it was utterly horrible. It lasted an instant—a single long scream; then was abruptly stilled.

And with blood pounding my temples and rushing like ice through my veins, I recognized it.

Anita!

CHAPTER IX

The Murder in A 22

"GOOD GOD, what was that?" Dr. Frank's face had gone white in the starlight. Snap stood like a statue of horror.

The deck here was patched as always, silver radiance from the deck ports. The empty deck chairs stood about. The scream was stilled, but now we heard a commotion inside—the rasp of opening cabin doors; questions from frightened passengers; the scurry of feet.

I found my voice. "Anita! Anita Prince!"

"Come on!" shouted Snap. "Was it

the Prince girl? I thought so too! In her stateroom, A 22!" He was dashing for the lounge archway.

Dr. Frank and I followed. I realized that we passed the deck door and window of A 22. But they were dark, and evidently sealed on the inside. The dim lounge was in a turmoil; passengers standing at their cabin doors. I heard Sir Arthur Coniston:

"I say, what was that?"

"Over there," said another man. "Come back inside, Martha." He shoved his wife back. "Mr. Haljan!" He plucked at me as I went past.

I shouted, "Go back to your rooms! We want order here—keep back!"

We came to the twin doors of A 22 and A 20. Both were closed. Dr. Frank was in advance of Snap and me. He paused at the sound of Captain Carter's voice behind us.

"Was it from in there? Wait a moment!"

Carter dashed up; he had a large heat-ray projector in his hand. He shoved us aside. "Let me in first. Is the door sealed? Gregg, keep those passengers back!"

THE door was not sealed. Carter burst into the room. I heard him gasp, "Good God!"

Snap and I shoved back three or four crowding passengers, and in that instant Dr. Frank had been in the room and out again.

"There's been an accident! Get back, Gregg! Snap, help him keep the crowd away." He shoved me forcibly.

From within, Carter was shouting, "Keep them out! Where are you, Frank? Come back here! Send a flash for Balch—I want Balch!"

Dr. Frank went back into the room and banged the cabin door upon Snap and me. I was unarmed—I had loaned my cylinder to the guard in the lower corridor. Weapon in hand, Snap forced the panic-stricken passengers back to their rooms.

"It's all right! An accident! Miss Prince is hurt."

Snap reassured them glibly; but he knew no more about it than I. Moa, with a night-robe drawn tight around her thin, tall figure, edged up to me.

"What has happened, Set Haljan?"

I gazed around for her brother Miko, but did not see him.

"An accident," I said shortly. "Go back to your room. Captain's orders."

She eyed me and then retreated. Snap was threatening everybody with his cylinder. Balch dashed up. "What in the hell? Where's Carter?"

"In there." I pounded on A 22. It opened cautiously. I could see only Carter, but I heard the murmuring voice of Dr. Frank through the interior connecting door to A 20.

THE captain rasped, "Get out, Haljan! Oh, is that you, Balch? Come in." He admitted the older officer and slammed the door again upon me. And immediately reopened it.

"Gregg, keep the passengers quiet. Tell them everything's all right. Miss Prince got frightened, that's all. Then go up to the turret. Tell Blackstone what's happened."

"But I don't know what's happened," I protested miserably.

Carter was grim and white. He whispered, "I think it may turn out to be murder, Gregg! No, not dead yet—Dr. Frank is trying—Don't stand there like an ass, man! Get to the turret! Verify our trajectory—no—wait—"

The captain was almost incoherent. "Wait a minute, I don't mean that! Tell Snap to watch his helio-room. Gregg, you and Blackstone stay in the chart-room. Arm yourselves and guard our weapons. By God, this murderer, whoever he is—"

I stammered, "If—if she dies—will you flash us word?"

He stared at me strangely. "I'll be there presently, Gregg."

He slammed the door upon me.

I followed his orders, but it was like a dream of horror. The turmoil of the ship gradually quieted. Snap went to the helio-room; Blackstone and I sat

in the tiny steel chart-room. How much time passed, I do not know. I was confused. Anita hurt! She might die. . . . Murdered. . . But why? By whom? Had George Prince been in his own room when the attack came? I thought now I recalled hearing the low murmur of his voice in there with Dr. Frank and Carter.

Where was Miko? It stabbed at me. I had not seen him among the passengers in the lounge.

CARTER came into the chart room.

"Gregg, you get to bed—you look like a ghost!"

"But—"

"She's not dead—she may live. Dr. Frank and her brother are with her. They're doing all they can." He told us what had happened. Anita and George Prince had both been asleep, each in their respective rooms. Someone unknown had opened Anita's corridor door.

"Wasn't it sealed?" I demanded.

"Yes. But the intruder opened it."

"Burst it? I didn't think it was broken."

"It wasn't broken. The assailant opened it somehow, and assaulted Miss Prince—shot her in the chest with a heat ray. Her left lung."

"She is conscious?" Balch demanded.

"Yes. But she did not see who did it. Nor did Prince. Her scream awakened him, but the intruder evidently fled out the corridor door of A 22, the way he entered."

I stood weak and shaken at the chart-room entrance. "A little son, cast in the gentle image of his mother. But with the strength of his father. . ." But Anita—dying, perhaps; and all my dreams were fading into a memory of what might have been.

"You go to bed, Gregg — we don't need you."

I was glad enough to get away. I would lie down for an hour, and then go to Anita's stateroom. I'd demand that Dr. Frank let me see her, if only for a moment.

I WENT to the stern deck-space where my cubby was located. My mind was confused, but some instinct within me made me verify the seals of my door and window. They were intact. I entered cautiously, switched on the dimmer of the tube-lights, and searched the room. It had only a bunk, my tiny desk, a chair and clothes robe.

There was no evidence of any intruder here. I set my door and window alarm. Then I audiphoned to the helio-room.

"Snap?"

"Yes."

I told him about Anita. Carter cut in on us from the chart-room. "Stop that, you fools!"

We cut off. Fully dressed, I flung myself on my bed. Anita might die. . . .

I must have fallen into a tortured sleep. I was awakened by the sound of my alarm buzzer. Someone was tampering with my door! Then the buzzer ceased; the marauder outside must have found a way of silencing it. But it had done its work—awakened me.

I had switched off the light; my cubby was Stygian dark. A heat-cylinder was in the bunk-bracket over my head; I searched for it, pried it loose softly.

I was fully awake. Alert. I could hear a faint sizzling—someone outside trying to unseal the door. In the darkness, cylinder in hand, I crept from the bunk. Crouched at the door. This time I would capture or kill this night prowler.

THE sizzling was faintly audible. My door-seal was breaking. Upon impulse I reached for the door, jerked it open.

No one there! The starlit segment of deck was empty. But I had leaped, and I struck a solid body, crouching in the doorway. A giant man. Miko!

His electronized metallic robe burned my hands. I lunged against him—I was almost as surprised as he. I shot, but the stab of heat evidently missed him.

The shock of my encounter close-

circuited his robe; he materialized in the starlight. A brief, savage encounter. He struck the weapon from my hand. He had dropped his hydrogen torch, and tried to grip me. But I twisted away from his hold.

"So it's you!"

"Be quiet, Gregg Haljan! I only want to talk."

Without warning, a stab of radiance shot from a weapon in his hand. It caught me. Ran like ice through my veins. Seized and numbed my limbs.

I fell helpless to the deck. Nerves and muscles paralyzed. My tongue was thick and inert. I could not speak, nor move. But I could see Miko bending over me. And hear him:

"I don't want to kill you, Haljan. We need you."

He gathered me up like a bundle in his huge arms; carried me swiftly across the deserted deck.

Snap's helio-room in the network under the dome was diagonally overhead. A white actinic light shot from it—caught us, bathed us. Snap had been awake; had heard the slight commotion of our encounter.

His voice rang shrilly: "Stop! I'll shoot!" His warning siren rang out to arouse the ship. His spotlight clung to us.

Miko ran with me a few steps. Then he cursed and dropped me, fled away. I fell like a sack of carbide to the deck. My senses faded into blackness.

"HE'S all right now."

I was in the chart-room, with Captain Carter, Snap and Dr. Frank bending over me. The surgeon said,

"Can you speak now, Gregg?"

I tried it. My tongue was thick, but it would move. "Yes."

I was soon revived. I sat up, with Dr. Frank vigorously rubbing me.

"I'm all right." I told them what had happened.

Captain Carter said abruptly, "Yes, we know that. And it was Miko also who killed Anita Prince. She told us before she died."

"Died! . . ." I leaped to my feet. "She . . . died. . . ."

"Yes, Gregg. An hour ago. Miko got into her stateroom and tried to force his love on her. She repulsed him—he killed her."

It struck me blank. And then with a rush came the thought, "He says Miko killed her. . . ."

I heard myself stammering, "Why—why we must get him!" I gathered my wits; a surge of hate swept me; a wild desire for vengeance.

"Why, by God, where is he? Why don't you go get him? I'll get him—I'll kill him, I tell you!"

"Easy, Gregg!" Dr. Frank gripped me.

The captain said gently, "We know how you feel, Gregg. She told us before she died."

"I'll bring him in here to you! But I'll kill him, I tell you!"

"No you won't, lad. You're hysterical now. We don't want him killed, not attacked even. Not yet. We'll explain later."

They sat me down, calming me.

Anita dead. The door of the shining garden was closed. A brief glimpse, given to me and to her of what might have been. And now she was dead. . . .

CHAPTER X

A Speck of Human Earth-dust, Falling Free. . . .

I HAD not been able at first to understand why Captain Carter wanted Miko left at liberty. Within me there was that cry of vengeance, as though to strike Miko down would somehow lessen my own grief at Anita's loss. Whatever Carter's purpose, Snap had not known it. But Balch and Dr. Frank were in the captain's confidence—all three of them working on some plan of action. Snap and I argued it, and thought we could fathom it; and in spite of my desire to kill Miko, the thing looked reasonable.

It was obvious that at least two of our passengers were plotting with Miko

and George Prince; trying during this voyage to learn what they could about Grantline's activities on the Moon; scheming doubtless to seize the treasure when the Planetara stopped at the Moon on the return voyage. I thought I could name those masquerading passengers. Ob Hahn, supposedly a Venus Mystic. And Rance Rankin, who called himself an American magician. Those two, Snap and I agreed, seemed most suspicious. And there was the purser.

With my hysteria still on me, I sat for a time on the deck outside the chart-room with Snap. Then Carter summoned us back, and we sat listening while he, Balch and Dr. Frank went on with their conference. Listening to them I could not but agree that our best plan was to secure evidence which would incriminate all who were concerned in the plot. Miko, we were convinced, had been the Martian who followed Snap and me from Halsey's office in Great-New York. George Prince had doubtless been the invisible eavesdropper outside the helio-room. He knew, and had told the others, that Grantline had found radium ore on the Moon—that the Planetara would stop there on the way home.

BUT we could not incarcerate George Prince for being an eavesdropper. Nor had we the faintest tangible evidence against Ob Hahn or Rance Rankin. And even the purser would probably be released by the Interplanetary Court of Ferrok-Shahn when it heard our evidence.

There was only Miko. We could arrest him for the murder of Anita. But the others would be put on their guard. It was Carter's idea to let Miko remain at liberty for a time and see if we could not identify and incriminate his fellows. The murder of Anita obviously had nothing to do with any plot against the Grantline Moon treasure.

"Why," exclaimed Balch, "there might be—probably are—huge Martian interests concerned in this thing. These men here aboard are only emissaries, making this voyage to learn what they can. When they get to Ferrok-Shahn they'll make their report, and then we'll have a real danger on our hands. Why, an outlaw ship could be launched from Ferrok-Shahn that would beat us back to the Moon—and Grantline is entirely without warning of any danger!"

It seemed obvious. Unscrupulous, moneyed criminals in Ferrok-Shahn would be dangerous indeed, once these details of Grantline were given them. And so now it was decided that in the remaining nine days of our outward voyage, we would attempt to secure enough evidence to arrest all these plotters.

"I'll have them all in the cage when we land," Carter declared grimly. "They'll make no report to their principals. The thing will end, be stamped out!"

Ah, the futile plans of men!

YET we thought it practical. We were all doubly armed now. Explosive bullet-projectors and the heat-ray cylinders. And we had several eavesdropping microphones which we planned to use whenever occasion offered.

It was now, Earth Eastern Time, A. M. Twenty-eight hours only of this eventful voyage were passed. The Planetara was some six million miles from the Earth; it blazed behind us, a tremendous giant.

The body of Anita was being made ready for burial. George Prince was still in his stateroom. Glutz, effeminate little hairdresser, who waxed rich acting as beauty doctor for the women passengers, and who in his youth had been an undertaker, had gone with Dr. Frank to prepare the body.

Gruesome details. I tried not to think of them. I sat, numbed, in the chart-room.

An astronomical burial—there was little precedent for it. I dragged myself to the stern deck-space where, at five A. M., the ceremony took place. Most of the passengers were asleep,

unaware of all this—which was why Carter hastened it.

We were a solemn little group, gathered there in the checkered starlight with the great vault of the heavens around us. A dismantled electronic projector—necessary when a long-range gun was mounted—had been rigged up in one of the deck ports.

They brought out the body. I stood apart, gazing reluctantly at the small bundle, wrapped like a mummy in a dark metallic screen-cloth. A patch of black silk rested over her face.

FOUR cabin stewards carried her. And beside her walked George Prince. A long black robe covered him, but his head was bare. And suddenly he reminded me of the ancient play-character of Hamlet. His black, wavy hair; his finely chiseled, pallid face, set now in a stern, patrician cast. And staring, I realized that however much of a villain this man not yet thirty might be, at this instant, walking beside the body of his dead sister, he was stricken with grief. He loved that sister with whom he had lived since childhood; and to see him now, with his set white face, no one could doubt it.

The little procession stopped in a patch of starlight by the port. They rested the body on a bank of chairs. The black-robed Chaplain, roused from his bed and still trembling from excitement of this sudden, inexplicable death on board, said a brief, solemn little prayer. An appeal: That the Almighty Ruler of all these blazing worlds might guard the soul of this gentle girl whose mortal remains were now to be returned to Him.

Ah, if ever God seemed hovering close, it was now at this instant, on this starlit deck floating in the black void of space.

Then Carter for just a moment removed the black shroud from her face. I saw her brother gaze silently; saw him stoop and implant a kiss—and turn away. I did not want to look, but I found myself moving slowly forward.

SHE lay, so beautiful. Her face, white and calm and peaceful in death. My sight blurred. Words seemed to echo: "A little son, cast in the gentle image of his mother. . . ."

"Easy, Gregg!" Snap was whispering to me. He had his arm around me. "Come on away!"

They tied the shroud over her face. I did not see them as they put her body in the tube, sent it through the exhaust-chamber, and dropped it.

But a moment later I saw it—a small black oblong bundle hovering beside us. It was perhaps a hundred feet away, circling us. Held by the Planetara's bulk, it had momentarily become our satellite. It swung around us like a moon. Gruesome satellite, by nature's laws forever to follow us.

Then from another tube at the bow, Blackstone operated a small Zed-co-ray projector. Its dull light caught the floating bundle, neutralizing its metallic wrappings.

It swung off at a tangent. Speeding. Falling free in the dome of the heavens. A rotating black oblong. But in a moment distance dwindled it to a speck. A dull silver dot with the sunlight on it. A speck of human Earth-dust, falling free. . .

It vanished. Anita—gone. In my heart was an echo of the prayer that the Almighty might watch over her and guard her always. . . .

CHAPTER XI

The Electrical Eavesdropper

I TURNED from the deck. Miko was near me! So he had dared to show himself here among us! But I realized that he could not be aware we knew he was the murderer. George Prince had been asleep, had not seen Miko with Anita. Miko, with impulsive rage, had shot the girl, and escaped. No doubt now he was cursing himself for having done it. And he could very well assume that Anita had

died without regaining consciousness to tell who had killed her.

He gazed at me now, here on the deck. I thought for an instant he was coming over to talk to me. Though he probably considered he was not suspected of the murder of Anita, he realized, of course, that his attack on me was known; he must have wondered what action Captain Carter would take.

But he did not approach me; he moved away, and went inside. Moa had been near him; and as though by pre-arrangement with him she now accosted me.

"I want to speak to you, Set Haljan."

"Go ahead."

I felt an instinctive aversion for this Martian girl. Yet she was not unattractive. Over six feet tall, straight and slim. Sleek blond hair. Rather a handsome face. Not gray, like the burly Miko, but pink and white. Stern-lipped, yet feminine, too. She was smiling gravely now. Her blue eyes regarded me keenly. She said gently:

"A sad occurrence, Gregg Haljan. And mysterious. I would not question you—"

"Is that all you have to say?" I demanded, when she paused.

"No. You are a handsome man, Gregg—attractive to women—to any Martian woman."

SHE said it impulsively. Admiration for me was on her face, in her eyes—a man cannot miss it.

"Thank you."

"I mean, I would be your friend. My brother Miko is so sorry about what happened between you and him this morning. He only wanted to talk to you, and he came to your cubby door—"

"With a torch to break its seal," I interjected.

She waved that away. "He was afraid you would not admit him. He told you he would not hurt you."

"And so he struck me with one of your cursed Martian paralyzing rays!"

"He is sorry. . . ."

She seemed gauging me, trying, no doubt, to find out what reprisal would be taken against her brother. I felt sure that Moa was as active as a man in any plan that was under way to capture the Grantline treasure. Miko, with his ungovernable temper, was doing things that put their plans in jeopardy.

I demanded abruptly, "What did your brother want to talk to me about?"

"Me," she said surprisingly. "I sent him. A Martian girl goes after what she wants. Did you know that?"

She swung on her heel and left me. I puzzled over it. Was that why Miko had struck me down, and was carrying me off? Was my accursed masculine beauty so attractive to this Martian girl? I did not think so. I could not believe that all these incidents were so unrelated to what I knew was the main undercurrent. They wanted me, had tried to capture me. For something else than because Moa liked my looks. . . .

DR. FRANK found me mooning alone.

"Go to bed, Gregg! You look awful."

"I don't want to go to bed."

"Where's Snap?"

"I don't know. He was here a while ago." I had not seen him since the burial of Anita.

"The captain wants him." The surgeon left me.

Within an hour the morning siren would arouse the passengers. I was seated in a secluded corner of the deck, when George Prince came along. He went past me, a slight, somber, dark-robed figure. He had on high, thick boots. A hood was over his head, but as he saw me he pushed it back and dropped down beside me.

But for a moment he did not speak. His face showed pallid in the pallid star-gleams.

"She said you loved her." His soft voice was throaty with emotion.

"Yes." I said it almost against my will. There seemed a bond springing between this bereaved brother and me.

He added, so softly I could barely hear him, "That makes you, I think, almost my friend. And you thought you were my enemy."

I held my answer. An incautious tongue running under emotion is a dangerous thing. And I was sure of nothing.

HE went on, "Almost my friend. Because—we both loved her, and she loved us both." He was hardly more than whispering. "And there is aboard—one whom we both hate."

"Miko!" It burst from me.

"Yes. But do not say it."

Another silence fell between us. He brushed back the black curls from his forehead. And his dark eyes searched mine.

"Have you an eavesdropping microphone, Haljan?"

I hesitated. "Yes."

"I was thinking...." He leaned closer toward me. "If, in half an hour, you could use it upon Miko's cabin—I would rather tell you than the captain or anyone else. The cabin will be insulated, but I shall find a way of cutting off that insulation so that you may hear."

So George Prince had turned with us! The shock of his sister's death—himself allied to her murderer!— had been too much for him. He was with us!

Yet his help must be given secretly. Miko would kill him in an instant if it became known.

He had been watchful of the deck. He stood up now.

"I think that is all."

As he turned away, I murmured, "But I do thank you...."

THE name Set Miko glowed upon the small metal door. It was in a transverse corridor similar to A 22. The corridor was forward of the lounge; it opened off the small circular library.

The library was unoccupied and unlighted, dim with only the reflected lights from the nearby passages. I crouched behind a cylinder-case. The door of Miko's room was in sight, being some thirty feet away from me.

I waited perhaps five minutes. No one entered. Then I realized that doubtless the conspirators were already there. I set my tiny eavesdropper on the library floor beside me; connected its little battery; focussed its projector. Was Miko's room insulated? I could not tell. There was a small ventilating grid above the door. Across its opening, if the room were insulated, a blue sheen of radiance would be showing. And there would be a faint hum. But from this distance I could not see or hear such details, and I was afraid to approach closer. Once in the transverse corridor, I would have no place to hide, no way of escape; if anyone approached Miko's door, I would be discovered.

I threw the current into my little apparatus. I prayed, if it met interference, that the slight sound would pass unnoticed. George Prince had said he would make opportunity to disconnect the room's insulation. He had evidently done so. I picked up the interior sounds at once; my headphone vibrated with them. And with trembling fingers on the little dial between my knees as I crouched in the darkness behind the cylinder-case, I syncronized.

"Johnson is a fool." It was Miko's voice. "We must have the pass-words."

"He got them from the hello-room." A man's voice; I puzzled over it at first, then recognized it. Rance Rankin.

MIKO said, "He is a fool. Walking around this ship as though with letters blazoned on his forehead —'Watch me—I need watching—' Hah! No wonder they apprehended him!"

Was George Prince in there? Rankin's voice said: "He would have turned the papers over to us. I would not blame him too much. What harm—"

"Oh, I'll release him," Miko declared.

"What harm? That braying ass did us plenty of harm. He has lost the pass-words. Better he had left them in the helio-room."

Moa was in the room. Her voice said: "We've got to have them. The Planetara, upon such an important voyage as this, may be watched. How do we know—"

"It is, no doubt," Rankin said quietly. "We ought to have the pass-words. When we are in control of this ship. . . ."

It sent a shiver through me. Were they planning to try and seize the Planetara? Now? It seemed so.

"Johnson undoubtedly memorized them," Moa was saying. "When we get him out—"

"Hahn is to do that, at the signal." Miko added, "George could do it better, perhaps."

And then I heard George Prince for the first time. He murmured, "I will try."

"No need," said Miko. "I praise where praise is deserved. And I have little praise for you now, George!"

I could not see what happened. A look, perhaps, which Prince could not avoid giving this man he had come to hate. Miko doubtless saw it, and the Martian's hot anger leaped."

Rankin said hurriedly, "Stop that!"

And Moa: "Let him alone! Sit down, you fool!"

I COULD hear the sound of a scuffle. A blow—a cry, half suppressed, from George Prince.

Then Miko: "I will not hurt him. Craven coward! Look at him! Hating me—frightened!"

I could fancy George Prince sitting there with murder in his heart, and Miko taunting him:

"Hates me now, because I shot his sister!"

Moa: "Hush!"

"I will not! Why should I not say it? I will tell you something else, George Prince. It was not Anita I shot at, but you! I meant nothing for her, but love. If you had not interfered—"

This was different from what we had figured. George Prince had come in from his own room, had tried to rescue his sister, and in the scuffle, Anita had taken the shot intended for George.

"I did not even know I had hit her," Miko was saying. "Not until I heard she was dead." He added sardonically, "I hoped it was you I had hit, George. And I will tell you this: You hate me no more than I hate you. If it were not for your knowledge of radium ores—"

"Is this to be a personal wrangle?" Rankin interrupted. "I thought we were here to plan—"

"It is planned," Miko said shortly. "I give orders, I do not plan. I am waiting now for the moment—"

HE checked himself. Moa said, "Does Rankin understand that no harm is to come to Gregg Haljan?"

"Yes," said Rankin. "And Dean. We need them, of course. But you cannot make Dean send messages if he refuses, nor make Haljan navigate."

"I know enough to check on them," Miko said grimly. "They will not fool me. And they will obey me, have no fear. A little touch of sulphuric—" His laugh was gruesome. "It makes the most stubborn very willing."

"I wish," said Moa, "we had Haljan safely hidden. If he is hurt—killed—"

So that was why Miko had tried to capture me? To keep me safe so that I might navigate the ship.

It occurred to me that I should get Carter at once. A plot to seize the Planetara? But when?

I froze with startled horror.

The diaphragms at my ears rang with Miko's words: "I have set the time for, now! In two minutes—"

It seemed to startle both Rankin and George Prince almost as much as I. Both exclaimed:

"No!"

"No? Why not? Everyone is at his post!"

Prince repeated: "No!"

And Rankin: "But can we trust them? The stewards—the crew?"

"Eight of them are our own men! You didn't know that, Rankin? They've been aboard the Planetara for several voyages. Oh, this is no quickly-planned affair, even though we let you in on it so recently. You and Johnson. By God!"

I CROUCHED tense. There was a commotion in the stateroom. Miko had discovered that his insulation was cut off! He had evidently leaped to his feet; I heard a chair overturn. And the Martian's roar: "It's off! Did you do that, Prince? By God, if I thought—"

My apparatus went suddenly dead as Miko flung on his insulation. I lost my wits in the confusion; I should have instantly taken off my vibrations. There was interference; it showed in the dark space of the ventilator grid over Miko's doorway; a snapping in the air there, a swirl of sparks.

I heard with my unaided ears Miko's roar over his insulation: "By God, they're listening!"

The scream of a hand-siren sounded from his stateroom. It rang over the ship. His signal! I heard it answered from some distant point. And then a shot; a commotion in the lower corridors. . . .

The attack upon the Planetara had started!

I was on my feet. The shouts of startled passengers sounded, a turmoil beginning everywhere.

I stood momentarily transfixed. The door of Miko's stateroom burst open. He stood there, with Moa, Rankin and George Prince crowding behind him.

He saw me. "You, Gregg Haljan!"

He came leaping at me.

CHAPTER XII

The Weightless Combat

I WAS taken wholly by surprise. There was an instant when I stood numbed, fumbling for a weapon at my belt, undecided whether to run or stand my ground. Miko was no more than twenty feet from me. He checked his forward rush. The light from an overhead tube was on him; I saw in his hand the cylinder projector of his paralyzing ray.

I plucked my heat cylinder from my belt, and fired without taking aim. My tiny heat-beam flashed. I must have grazed Miko's hand. His roar of anger and pain rang out over the turmoil. He dropped his weapon; then stooped to pick it up. But Moa forestalled him. She leaped and seized it.

"Careful! Fool—you promised not to hurt him!"

A confusion of swift action. Rankin had turned and darted away. I saw George Prince stumbling half in front of the struggling Miko and Moa. And I heard footsteps beside me; a hand gripped me, jerked at me.

Over the turmoil Prince's voice sounded: "Gregg—Haljan!"

I recall I had the impression that Prince was frightened; he had half fallen in front of Miko. And there was Miko's voice:

"Let go of me!"

And Moa: "Come!"

It was Balch gripping me. "Gregg! This way—run! Get out of here! He'll kill you with that ray—"

Miko's ray flashed, but George Prince had knocked at his arm. I did not dare fire again. Prince was in the way. Balch, who was unarmed, shoved me violently back.

"Gregg—the chart-room!"

I TURNED and ran, with Balch after me. Prince had fallen, or been felled by Miko. A flash followed me. Miko's weapon, but again it missed. He did not pursue me; he ran the other way, through the port-side door of the library.

Balch and I found ourselves in the lounge. Shouting, frightened passengers were everywhere. The place was in wild confusion, the whole ship ringing now with shouts.

"To the chart-room, Gregg!"

I called to the passengers: "Get back to your rooms!"

I followed Balch. We ran through the archway to the deck. In the starlight I saw figures scurrying aft, but none were near us. The deck forward was dim with heavy shadows. The oval windows and door of the chart-room were blue-yellow from the tube-lights inside. No one seemed on the deck there; and then, as we approached, I saw, further forward in the bow, the trap-door to the cage standing open. Johnson had been released.

From one of the chart-room windows a heat-ray sizzled. It barely missed us. Balch shouted, "Carter—don't!"

The captain called, "Oh—you, Balch—and Haljan—"

He came out on the deck as we rushed up. His left arm was dangling limp.

"God—this—" He got no further. From the turret overhead a tiny search-beam came down and disclosed us. Blackstone was supposed to be on duty up there, with a course-master at the controls. But, glancing up, I saw, illumined by the turret lights, the figures of Ob Hahn in his purple-white robe, and Johnson the purser. And on the turret balcony, two fallen men—Blackstone and the course-master.

JOHNSON was training the spotlight on us. And Hahn fired a Martian ray. It struck Balch beside me. He dropped.

Carter was shouting, "Inside! Gregg, get inside!"

I stopped to raise up Balch. Another beam came down. A heat-ray this time. It caught the fallen Balch full in the chest, piercing him through. The smell of his burning flesh rose to sicken me. He was dead. I dropped his body. Carter shoved me into the chart-room.

In the small, steel-lined room, Carter and I slid the door closed. We were alone here. The thing had come so quickly it had taken Captain Carter, like us all, wholly unawares. We had anticipated spying eavesdroppers, but not this open brigandage. No more than a minute or two had passed since Miko's siren in his stateroom had given the signal for the attack. Carter had been in the chart-room. Blackstone was in the turret. At the outbreak of confusion, Carter dashed out to see Hahn releasing Johnson from the cage. From the forward chart-room window now I could see where Hahn with a torch had broken the cage-seal. The torch lay on the deck. There had been an exchange of shots; Carter's arm was paralyzed; Johnson and Hahn had escaped.

Carter was as confused as I. There had simultaneously been an encounter up in the turret. Blackstone and the course-master were killed. The lookout had been shot from his post in the forward observatory. His body dangled now, twisted half in and half out of his window.

WE could see several of Miko's men—erstwhile members of our crew and steward-corps—scurrying from the turret along the upper bridges toward the dark and silent helio-room. Snap was up there. But was he? The helio-room glowed suddenly with dim light, but there was no evidence of a fight there. The fighting seemed mostly below the deck, down in the hull-corridors. A blended horror of sounds came up to us. Screams, shouts, and the hissing and snapping of ray weapons. Our crew—such of them as were loyal—were making a stand down below. But it was brief. Within a minute it died away. The passengers, amidships in the superstructure, were still shouting. Then above them Miko's roar sounded.

"Be quiet! Go in your rooms—you will not be harmed."

The brigands in these few minutes were in control of the ship. All but this little chart-room, where, with most of the ship's weapons, Carter and I were intrenched.

"God, Gregg, that this should come upon us!"

Carter was fumbling with the chart-room weapons. "Here, Gregg, help me. What have you got? Heat-ray? That's all I had ready."

It struck me then as I helped him make the connections that Carter in this crisis was at best an inefficient commander. His red face had gone splotchy purple; his hands were trembling. Skilled as captain of a peaceful liner, he was at a loss now. Nor could I blame him. It is easy to say we might have taken warning, done this or that, and come triumphant through this attack. But only the fool looks backward and says, "I would have done better."

I TRIED to summon my wits. The ship was lost to us, unless Carter and I could do something. Our futile weapons! They were all here—four or five heat-ray hand projectors that could send a pencil-ray a hundred feet or so. I shot one diagonally up at the turret where Johnson was leering down at our rear window, but he saw my gesture and dropped back out of sight. The heat-beam flashed harmlessly up and struck the turret roof. Then across the turret window came a sheen of radiance—an electro-barrage. And behind it, Hahn's suave, evil face appeared. He shouted down:

"We have orders to spare you, Gregg Haljan—or you would have been killed long ago!"

My answering shot hit his barrage with a shower of sparks, behind which he stood unmoved.

Carter handed me another weapon. "Gregg, try this."

I levelled the old explosive bullet projector; Carter crouched beside me. But before I could press the trigger, from somewhere down the starlit deck an electro-beam hit me. The little rifle exploded, burst its breech. I sank back to the floor, tingling from the shock of the hostile current. My hands were blackened from the exploding powder.

Carter seized me. "No use! Hurt?"

"No."

THE stars through the dome-windows were swinging. A long swing—the shadows and starlit patches on the deck were all shifting. The Planetara was turning. The heavens revolved in a great round sweep of movement, then settled as we took our new course. Hahn at the turret controls had swung us. The earth and the sun showed over our bow quarter. The sunlight mingled red-yellow with the brilliant starlight. Hahn's signals were sounding; I heard them answered from the mechanism rooms down below. Brigands there—in full control. The gravity plates were being set to the new positions; we were on our new course. Headed a point or two off the Earth-line. Not headed for the moon? I wondered.

Carter and I were planning nothing. What was there to plan? We were under observation. A Martian paralyzing ray—or an electronic beam, far more deadly than our own puny police weapons—would have struck us the instant we tried to leave the chart-room.

My swift-running thoughts were interrupted by a shout from down the deck. At a corner of the cabin superstucture some fifty feet from our windows the figure of Miko appeared. A barrage-radiance hung around him like a shimmering mantle. His voice sounded:

"Gregg Haljan, do you yield?"

Carter leaped up from where he and I were crouching. Against all reason of safety he leaned from the low window, waving his hamlike fist.

"Yield? No! I am in command here, you pirate! Brigand—murderer!"

I PUSHED him back. "Careful!" He was spluttering, and over it Miko's sardonic laugh sounded. "Very well—but you will talk? Shall we argue about it?"

I stood up. "What do you want to say, Miko?"

Behind him the tall, thin figure of his sister showed. She was plucking at him. He turned violently.

"I won't hurt him! Gregg Haljan—is this a truce? You will not shoot?" He was shielding Moa.

"No," I called. "For a moment, no. A truce. What is it you want to say?"

I could hear the babble of passengers who were herded in the cabin with brigands guarding them. George Prince, bareheaded, but shrouded in his cloak, showed in a patch of light behind Moa. He looked my way and then retreated into the lounge archway.

Miko called, "You must yield. We want you, Haljan."

"No doubt," I jeered.

"Alive. It is easy to kill you."

I COULD not doubt that. Carter and I were little more than rats in a trap, here in the chart-room. But Miko wanted to take me alive: that was not so simple. He added persuasively:

"We want you to help us navigate. Will you?"

"No."

"Will you help us, Captain Carter? Tell your cub, this Haljan, to yield. You are fools. We understand that Haljan has been handling the ship's mathematics. Him we need most."

Carter roared: "Get back from there! This is no truce!"

I shoved aside his levelled bullet-projector. "Wait a minute!" I called to Mika. "Navigate—where?"

"Oh," he retorted, "that is our business, not yours. When you lay down your weapons and come out of there, I will give you the course."

"Back to the earth?" I suggested.

I could fancy him grinning behind the sheen of his barrage at my question.

"The earth? Yes,—shall we go there? Give me your orders, Gregg Haljan. Of course I will obey them."

His sardonic words were interrupted. And I realized that all this parley was a ruse of Miko's to take me alive. He had made a gesture. Hahn, watching from the turret window, doubtless flashed a signal down to the hull-corridors. The magnetizer control under the chart-room was altered, our artificial gravity cut off. I felt the sudden lightness; I gripped the window casement and clung. Carter was startled into incautious movement. It flung him out into the center of the chart-room, his arms and legs grotesquely flailing.

AND across the chart-room, in the opposite window, I felt rather than saw the shape of something. A figure—almost invisible, but not quite—was trying to climb in! I flung the empty rifle I was holding. It hit something solid in the window; in a flare of sparks a black-hooded figure materialized. A man climbing in! His weapon spat. There was a tiny electronic flash, deadly silent. The intruder had shot at Carter; struck him. Carter gave one queer scream. He had floated to the floor; his convulsive movement when he was hit hurled him to the ceiling. His body struck, twitched; bounced back and sank inert on the floor-grid almost at my feet.

I clung to the casement. Across the space of the weightless room the hooded intruder was also clinging. His hood fell back. It was Johnson. He leered at me.

"Killed him, the bully! Well, he deserved it. Now for you, Mr. Third Officer Haljan!"

But he did not dare fire at me—Miko had forbidden it. I saw him reach under his robe, doubtless for a low-powered paralyzing ray such as Miko already had used on me. But he never got it out. I had no weapon within reach. I leaned into the room, still holding the casement, and doubled my legs under me. I kicked out from the window.

The force catapaulted me across the space of the room like a volplane. I struck the purser. We gripped. Our locked, struggling bodies bounced out into the room. We struck the floor, surged up like balloons to the ceiling, struck it with a flailing arm or a leg and floated back.

GROTESQUE, abnormal combat! Like fighting in weightless water. Johnson clutched his weapon, but I twisted his wrist, held his arm outstretched so that he could not aim it. I was aware of Miko's voice shouting on the deck outside.

Johnson's left hand was gouging at my face, his fingers plucking at my eyes. We lunged down to the floor, then up again, close to the ceiling.

I twisted his wrists. He dropped the weapon and it sank away. I tried to reach it, but could not. Then I had him by the throat. I was stronger than he, and more agile. I tried choking him, his thick bull-neck within my fingers. He kicked, scrambled, tore and gouged at me. Tried to shout, but it ended in a gurgle. And then, as he felt his breath stopped, his hands came up in an effort to tear mine loose.

We sank again to the floor. We were momentarily upright. I felt my feet touch. I bent my knees. We sank further.

And then I kicked violently upward. Our locked bodies shot to the ceiling. Johnson's head was above me. It struck the steel roof of the chart-room. A violent blow. I felt him go suddenly limp. I cast him off, and, doubling my body, I kicked at the ceiling. It sent me diagonally downward to the window, where I clung and regained stability.

And I saw Miko standing on the deck with a weapon levelled at me!

CHAPTER XIII

The Torture

"HALJAN! Yield or I'll fire! Moa, give me the smaller one. This cursed—"

He had in his hand too large a projector. Its ray would kill me. If he wanted to take me alive, he would not fire. I chanced it.

"No!"

I tried to draw myself beneath the window. An automatic bullet projector was on the floor where Carter had dropped it. I pulled myself down. Miko did not fire. I reached the revolver. The dead bodies of the captain and purser had drifted together on the floor in the center of the room.

I hitched myself back to the window. With upraised weapon I gazed cautiously out. Miko had disappeared. The deck within my line of vision was empty.

But was it? Something told me to beware. I clung to the casement, ready upon the instant to shove myself down. There was a movement in a shadow along the deck. Then a figure rose up.

"Don't fire, Haljan!"

The sharp command, half appeal, stopped the pressure of my finger on the trigger of the automatic. It was the tall lanky Englishman, Sir Arthur Coniston, as he called himself. So he too was one of Miko's band! The light through a dome-window fell full on him.

"If you fire, Halian, and kill me—Miko will kill you then, surely."

From where he had been crouching he could not command my window. But now, upon the heels of his placating words, he abruptly shot. The low-powered ray, had it struck, would have felled me without killing. But it went over my head as I dropped. Its aura made my senses reel.

Coniston shouted, "Haljan!"

I DID not answer. I wondered if he would dare approach to see if I had been hit. A minute passed. Then another. I thought I heard Miko's voice on the deck outside. But it was an aerial, microscopic whisper close beside me.

"We see you, Haljan! You must yield!"

Their eavesdropping vibrations, with audible projection, were upon me. I retorted aloud,

"Come and get me! You cannot take me alive."

I do protest if this action of mine in the chart-room may seem bravado. I had no wish to die. There was within

me a very healthy desire for life. But I felt, by holding out, that some chance might come wherewith I might turn events against these brigands. Yet reason told me it was hopeless. Our loyal members of the crew were killed, no doubt. Captain Carter and Balch were killed. The lookouts and Course-masters also. And Blackstone.

There remained only Dr. Frank and Snap. Their fate I did not yet know. And there was George Prince. He, perhaps, would help me if he could. But, at best, he was a dubious ally.

"You are very foolish, Haljan," murmured the projection of Miko's voice. And then I heard Coniston:

"See here, why would not a hundred pounds of gold-leaf tempt you? The code-words which were taken from Johnson—I mean to say, why not tell us where they are?"

So that was one of the brigands' new difficulties! Snap had taken the code-word sheet, that time we sealed the purser in the cage.

I said, "You'll never find them. And when a police ship sights us, what will you do then?"

The chances of a police ship were slim indeed, but the brigands evidently did not know that. I wondered again what had become of Snap. Was he captured—or still holding them off?

I was watching my windows; for at any moment, under cover of this talk, I might be assailed.

GRAVITY came suddenly to the room. Miko's voice said, "We mean well by you, Haljan. There is your normality. Join us. We need you to chart our course."

"And a hundred pounds of gold-leaf," urged Coniston. "Or more. Why, this treasure—"

I could hear an oath from Miko. And then his ironic voice: "We will not bother you, Haljan. There is no hurry. You will be hungry in good time. And sleepy. Then we will come and get you. And a little acid will make you think differently about helping us. . . ."

His vibrations died away. The pull of gravity in the room was normal. I was alone in the dim silence, with the bodies of Carter and Johnson lying huddled on the grid. I bent to examine them. Both were dead.

My isolation was no ruse this time. The outlaws made no further attack. Half an hour passed. The deck outside, what I could see of it, was vacant. Balch lay dead close outside the chart-room door. The bodies of Blackstone and the Course-master had been removed from the turret window. A forward look-out—one of Miko's men—was on duty in the nearby tower. Hahn was at the turret controls. The ship was under orderly handling, heading back upon a new course. For the Earth? Or the Moon? It did not seem so.

I found, in the chart-room, a Benson curve-light projector which poor Captain Carter had very nearly assembled. I worked on it, trained it through my rear window, along the empty deck; bent it into the lounge archway. Upon my grid the image of the lounge interior presently focussed. The passengers in the lounge were huddled in a group. Disheveled, frightened, with Moa standing watching them. Stewards were serving them with a meal.

UPON a bench, bodies were lying. Some were dead. I saw Rance Rankin. Others were evidently only injured. Dr. Frank was moving among them, attending them. Venza was there, unharmed. And I saw the gamblers, Shac and Dud, sitting white-faced, whispering together. And Glutz's little be-ribboned, be-curled figure on a stool.

George Prince was there, standing against the wall, shrouded in his mourning cloak, watching the scene with alert, roving eyes. And by the opposite doorway, the huge towering figure of Miko stood on guard. But Snap was missing.

A brief glimpse. Miko saw my Benson-light. I could have equipped

a heat-ray, and fired along the curved Benson-light into that lounge. But Miko gave me no time.

He slid the lounge door closed, and Moa leaped to close the one on my side. My light was cut off; my grid showed only the blank deck and door.

Another interval. I had made plans. Futile plans! I could get into the turret perhaps, and kill Hahn. I had the invisible cloak which Johnson was wearing. I took it from his body. Its mechanism could be repaired. Why, with it I could creep about the ship, kill these brigands one by one perhaps. George Prince would be with me. The brigands who had been posing as the stewards and crew-members were unable to navigate; they would obey my orders. There were only Miko, Coniston and Hahn to kill.

Futile plans! From my window I could gaze up to the helio-room. And now abruptly I heard Snap's voice:

"No! I tell you—no!"

And Miko: "Very well. We will try this."

So Snap was captured, but not killed. Relief swept me. He was in the helio-room, and Miko was with him. But my relief was short-lived.

AFTER a brief interval there came a moan from Snap. It floated down from the silence overhead. It made me shudder.

My Benson-beam shot into the helio window. It showed me Snap lying there on the floor. He was bound with wire. His torso had been stripped. His livid face was ghastly plain in my light.

Miko was bending over him. Miko with a heat-cylinder no longer than a finger. Its needle-beam played upon Snap's naked chest. I could see the gruesome little trail of smoke rising; and as Snap twisted and jerked, there on his flesh was the red and blistered trail of the violet-hot ray.

"Now will you tell?"

"No!"

Miko laughed. "No? Then I shall write my name a little deeper. . . ."

A black scar now—a trail etched in the quivering flesh.

"Oh!—" Snap's face went white as chalk as he pressed his lips together.

"Or a little acid? This fire-writing does not really hurt? Tell me what you did with those code-words!"

"No!"

In his absorption Miko did not notice my light. Nor did I have the wit to try and fire along it. I was trembling. Snap under torture!

As the beam went deeper, Snap suddenly screamed. But he ended, "No! I will send—no message for you—"

It had been only a moment. In the chart-room window beside me again a figure appeared! No image. A solid, living person, undisguised by any cloak of invisibility. George Prince had chanced my fire and had crept up upon me.

"Haljan! Don't attack me."

I DROPPED my light connections. As impulsively I stood up, I saw through the window the figure of Coniston on the deck watching the result of Prince's venture.

"Haljan—yield."

Prince no more than whispered it. He stood outside on the deck; the low window casement touched his waist. He leaned over it.

"He's torturing Snap! Call out that you will yield."

The thought had already been in my mind. Another scream from Snap chilled me with horror. I shouted,

"Miko! Stop!"

I rushed to the window and Prince gripped me.

"Louder!"

I called louder. "*Miko!* Stop!" My upflung voice mingled with Snap's agony of protest. Then Miko heard me. His head and shoulders showed up there at the helio-room oval.

"You, Haljan?"

Prince shouted, "I have made him yield. He will obey you if you stop that torture."

I think that poor Snap must have fainted. He was silent. I called, "Stop! I will do what you command."

Miko jeered, "That is good. A bargain, if you and Dean obey me. Disarm him, Prince, and bring him out."

MIKO moved back into the helio-room. On the deck Coniston was advancing, but cautiously, mistrustful of me.

"Gregg."

George Prince flung a leg over the casement and leaped lightly into the dim chart-room. His small slender figure stood beside me, clung to me.

"Gregg."

A moment, while we stood there together. No ray was upon us. Coniston could not see us, nor could he hear our whispers.

"Gregg."

A different voice; its throaty, husky quality gone. A soft pleading. "Gregg—

"Gregg, don't you know me? Gregg, dear. . . ."

Why, what was this? Not George Prince? A masquerader, yet so like George Prince.

"Gregg, don't you know me?"

Clinging to me. A soft touch upon my arm. Fingers, clinging. A surge of warm, tingling current was flowing between us.

My sweep of instant thoughts. A speck of human Earth-dust, falling free. That was George Prince, who had been killed. George Prince's body, disguised by the scheming Carter and Dr. Frank, buried in the guise of his sister. And this black-robed figure who was trying to help us—

"Anita! Dear God! Anita, darling! Anita!"

"Gregg, dear one!"

"Anita! Dear God!"

MY arms went around her, my lips pressed hers, and felt her tremulous, eager answer.

"Gregg, dear."

"Anita, you!"

The form of Coniston showed at our window. She cast me off. She said, with her throaty swagger of assumed masculinity:

"I have him, Sir Arthur. He will obey us."

I sensed her warning glance. She shoved me toward the window. She said ironically, "Have no fear, Haljan. You will not be tortured, you and Dean, if you obey our commands."

Coniston gripped me. "You fool! You caused us a lot of trouble, didn't you? Move along there!"

He jerked me roughly through the window. Marched me the length of the deck. Out to the stern-space; opened the door of my cubby; flung me in and sealed the door upon me.

"Miko will come presently."

I stood in the darkness of my tiny room, listening to his retreating footsteps. But my mind was not on him. . . .

All the Universe in that instant had changed for me. Anita was alive!

(To be continued)

REMEMBER

ASTOUNDING STORIES

Appears on Newsstands

THE FIRST THURSDAY IN EACH MONTH

In the Next Issue

MONSTERS of MOYEN

A Complete Novelet of a Half-God Half-Beast's Extraordinary Attempt to Dominate the Earth

By **Arthur J. Burks**

A Large Instalment of

BRIGANDS of the MOON

The Splendid Interplanetary Novel

By **Ray Cummings**

The RAY of MADNESS

The Account of Another of Dr. Bird's Amazing Exploits

By **Captain S. P. Meek**

—And Many Other Stories by Your Favorite Authors!

A terrific force was emanating from that devilish globe above.

The Soul Master

By Will Smith and R. J. Robbins

THE train was slowing down for Keegan. A whistle from the locomotive ahead had warned the two alert young men in the smoker to that effect, and they arose to leave the train. Both were neatly and quietly dressed. One carried a medium-sized camera with the necessary tripod and accessory satchel. The other carried no impediments of any sort. Both were smoking cigars, evidently not of expensive variety, judging by the unaromatic atmosphere thereabouts.

Desperately O'Hara plunged into Prof. Kell's mysterious mansion. For his friend Skip was the victim of the eccentric scientist's de-astralizing experiment, and faced a fate more hideous than death.

"Can't see what Bland shipped us up to this one-horse dump for," grumbled Skip Hanelon, the one

who carried the camera. He was the slighter of the two and perhaps half a head shorter than the other. "Do you know anything about it?"

"Not much," confessed the other as they alighted from the smoker. "All I can tell you is that Bland sent for me early this morning, told me to get a story out of this Professor Kell and to drag you along. After we get there you are to do as judgment dictates. But I remember that the Chief was specific as regards one thing. You are to get the proff's mug. Don't forget. The old fellow may growl and show fight, but it's up to you to deliver the goods—or, in this case, get them. Don't depend on me for help. I expect to have troubles of my own." Thus gloomed Horace Perry, star reporter for the Journal.

"This Keegan place"—Handlon was using his eyes swiftly and comprehensively—"isn't worth much. Can't see how it manages to even rate a name. Some dump, all right!"

"You said a coupla mouthfuls."

"How's the train service, if any?"

"Rotten. Two trains a day." The other was anything but enthusiastic. "We've a nice long wait for the next one, you can bet. Now, just add to that a rough reception after we reach the old lion's lair and you get a nice idea of what Bland expects from his men."

HANDLON made a wry face at this. "The bird who first applied the words 'Hard Boiled' to the Chief's monniker knew something."

"You don't know the half of it," retorted Perry encouragingly. "Just wait and see what a beaut of a fit he can throw for *your* benefit if you fail to do your stuff—and I don't mean maybe."

Old Man Bland owned the Journal, hired and fired his crew and did his own editing, with the help of as capable an office gang as could be gotten together. It is quite possible that "Hard Boiled" Bland demanded more from his men than any other editor ever has before or since. Nevertheless he got results, and none of his experienced underlings ever kicked, for the pay was right. If a hapless scribe had the temerity to enter the editorial sanctum with a negative report, the almost invariable reply had been a glare and a peremptory order, "Get the copy."

And get it they did. If a person refused an interview these clever fellows generally succeeded in getting their information from the next most reliable source, and it arrived in print just the same.

Of such a breed was Perry. Handlon, being a more recent acquisition to the staff, was not yet especially aggressive in his work. On this account the former took keen zest in scaring him into displaying a bit more sand.

THE train had disappeared around a bend and the two reporters felt themselves marooned. Keegan, without question, was a most forlorn looking spot. A dismal shanty, much the worse for weather, stood beside the track. In front, a few rotting planks proclaimed that once upon a time the place had boasted a real freight platform. Probably, back in some long-forgotten age, a station agent had also held forth in the rickety shanty. A sign hung on each end of the crumbling structure on which could still be deciphered the legend "KEEGAN." On the opposite side of the track was an old, disused siding. The only other feature of interest thereabouts was a well traveled country road which crossed the tracks near the shanty, wound sinuously over a rock-strewn hill and became lost in the mazes of an upland forest.

There being no signboard of any kind to indicate their destination, the two, after a moment's hesitation, started off briskly in a chance direction. The air was hot and sultry, and in the open spaces the sun beat down mercilessly upon the two hapless ones. As they proceeded into the depths of the forest they were shielded somewhat from the worst of the heat. Gradually upon their city-bred nostrils there stole the odor of conifers, accompanied by a myriad of other forest odors. Both sniffed the air appreciatively.

"This is sure the life," remarked Perry. "If I weren't so darn thirsty now. . . ." He became lost in mournful thought.

A CONSIDERABLE time passed. The newspaper men trudged wearily along until finally another bend brought them to the beginning of a steep descent. The forest had thinned out to nothing.

"Seems to me I smell smoke," blurted out Handlon suddenly. "Must be that we are approaching the old party's lair. Remember? 'Bland said that he—"

"Uh huh!" the other grunted, almost inaudibly. Now that they seemed to be arriving at their destination something had occurred to him. He had dished from his pocket a sheaf of clippings and was perusing them intently. "Bland said, 'Get the copy'," he muttered irrelevantly and half to himself.

The clippings all related directly to Professor Kell or to happenings local to Keegan. Some were of peculiar interest. The first one was headlined thus:

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF ROBERT MANION AND DAUGHTER STILL UNSOLVED

The piece contained a description of the missing man, a fairly prosperous banker who had been seen four days previously driving through Keegan in a small roadster, and one of the girl, who was in the car with him. It told that the banker and his daughter were last seen by a farmer named Willetts who lived in a shack on the East Keegan road, fleeing before a bad thunder storm. He believed the pair were trying to make the Kell mansion ahead of the rain. Nothing more of the Manions or their car had been seen, and their personal effects remained at their hotel in a nearby village unclaimed. The heavy rain had of course effectually obliterated all wheel tracks.

Another clipping was fairly lengthy, but Perry glanced only at the headlines:

KELL STILL CARRYING ON HIS STRANGE EXPERIMENTS

Has Long Been Known to Have Fantastic Theories. Refuses to Divulge Exact Methods Employed, or Nature of Results

Still another appeared to be an excerpt from an article in an agricultural paper. It read:

A prize bull belonging to Alton Shepard, a Keegan cattle breeder, has created considerable sensation by running amuck in a most peculiar manner. While seemingly more intelligent than heretofore, it has developed characteristics known to be utterly alien to this type of animal.

Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of the case is the refusal of the animal to eat its accustomed food. Instead it now consumes enormous quantities of meat. The terrific bellow of the animal's voice has also undergone a marked change, now resembling nothing earthly, although some have remarked that it could be likened to the bay of an enormous hound. Some of its later actions have seemingly added further canine attributes, which make the matter all the more mystifying. Veterinaries are asking why this animal should chase automobiles, and why it should carry bones in its mouth and try to bury them!

The last one read in part:

Professor Kell has been questioned by authorities at Keegan relative to the disappearance there last Tuesday of Robert Manion and his daughter. Kell seemed unable to furnish clues of any value, but officials are not entirely satisfied with the man's attitude toward the questions.

Somewhat bewildered by these apparently unrelated items, the reporter remained lost in thought for quite a space, the while he endeavored to map out his course of action when he should meet the redoubtable Professor. That many of the weird occurrences could be traced in some way to the latter's door had evidently occurred to Bland. Furthermore, the Old Man relied implicitly upon Perry to get results.

It must be said that for once the star reporter was not overly enthusiastic with the assignment. Certain rumors aside from the clippings in his hand had produced in his mind a feeling of uneasiness. So far as his personal preference was concerned he would have been well satisfied if some cub reporter had been given the job. Try as he would, however, he could offer no tangible reason for the sudden wariness.

He was aroused from his absorption by his companion.

"Thought I smelled smoke a while

back, and I was right. That's the house up in the edge of the pines. Deep grounds in front and all gone to seed; fits the description exactly. Thank Heaven we struck off from the station in the right direction. This stroll has been long enough. Come out of it and let's get this job finished."

Suiting the action to the words Handlon started off at a brisk pace down the hill, followed at a more moderate rate by Perry. At length they came within full sight of the grounds. Extending for a considerable distance before them and enclosing a large tract of land now well covered with lush grass, was a formidable looking wall. In former days a glorious mantle of ivy had covered the rough stones; but now there was little left, and what there was looked pitifully decrepit. They continued their progress along this barrier, finally coming upon a huge iron gate now much the worse for rust. It stood wide open.

THE road up to the house had long since become overgrown with rank grass and weeds. Faintly traceable through the mass of green could be seen a rough footpath which the two followed carefully. They met no one. As they approached the night of black pines the mass of the old mansion began to loom up before them, grim and forbidding.

Instinctively both shivered. The silence of the place was complete and of an uncannily tangible quality. Nervously they looked about them.

"How do you like it, Skip?" The words from Perry's previously silent lips broke upon the stillness like a thunderclap. The other started.

"I should hate to die in it," Handlon answered solemnly. "I'll bet the old joint is haunted. Nobody but a lunatic would ever live in it."

"I get a good deal the same impression myself," said Perry. "I don't wonder that Bland sent two of us to cover the job."

As he spoke he mounted a flight of steps to a tumbledown veranda. There was no sign of a door bell on the weather-beaten portal, but an ancient knocker of bronze hanging forlornly before him seemed to suggest a means of attracting attention. He raised it and rapped smartly.

NO answer.

Possessing all the attributes of the conventional reporter and a few additional ones, Perry did not allow himself to become disheartened, but merely repeated his summons, this time with more vim.

"Well, Horace," grinned Handlon, "it does look as if we were not so very welcome here. However, seems to me if you were to pick up that piece of dead limb and do some real knocking with it. The dear Professor may be deaf, you know, or maybe he's—"

"Skip, my boy, I don't know as we ought to go in right now after all. Do you realize it will soon be dark?"

"To tell you the truth, Horace, I'm not stuck on this assignment either. And I feel that after dark I should like it even less, somehow. But, gee, the Old Man. . . ."

"Oh, I'm not thinking of quitting on the job. We don't do that on the Journal." Perry smiled paternally at the photographer. Could it be he had purposely raised the other's hopes in order to chaff him some more? "But I was thinking that it might be a good idea to look about the outbuildings a bit while we have a little daylight. Eh?"

Handlon looked disappointed, but nodded gamely. He delayed only long enough to deposit his camera and traps behind a grossly overgrown hydrangea by the steps, then, with a resigned air, declared himself ready to follow wherever the other might lead.

Perry elected to explore the barn first. This was a depressing old pile, unpainted in years, with what had once been stout doors now swinging and bumping in the light breeze. As the two men drew nearer, this breeze—

which seemed to sigh through the place at will—brought foul odors that told them the place was at least not tenantless. In some trepidation they stepped inside and stood blinking in the half darkness.

"Pretty Polly!"

"Good God! What was that?" Handlon whispered. He knew it was no parrot's voice. This was a far deeper sound than that, a sound louder than anything a parrot's throat could produce. It came from the direction of a ruinous stall over near a cobwebbed window. As Perry started fearfully toward this, there issued from it a curious scraping sound, followed by a fall that shook the floor, and a threshing as of hoofs. Now the great voice could be heard again, this time uttering what sounded strangely like oaths roared out in a foreign tongue. Yet when the newspaper men reached the stall they found it occupied only by a large mule.

THE animal was lying on its side, its feet scraping feebly against the side of the stall. The heaving, foam-flecked body was a mass of hideous bruises, some of which were bleeding profusely. The creature seemed to be in the last stage of exhaustion, lying with lips drawn back and eyes closed. Beneath it and scattered all over the stall floor was a thick layer of some whitish seeds.

"That's—why that's sunflower seed, Horace!" Handlon almost whimpered. "And look! Look in that crib! It's full of the same stuff! Where's the hay, Horace? Does this thing—"

He was interrupted by a mighty movement of the beast—a threshing that nearly blinded the men in the cloud of bloodstained seeds it raised. With something between a curse and a sob, the mule lunged at its crib as if attempting to get bodily into it. But no: it was only trying to perch on its edge! Now it had succeeded. The ungainly beast hung there a second, two, three. From its uplifted throat issued that usually innocuous phrase, a phrase now a thing of delirious horror:

"Pretty Polly!"

With a crash the tortured creature fell to the floor, to lie there gasping and moaning.

Skip Handlon left that barn. Perry retained just enough wit to do what he should have done the instant he first saw the animal. He whipped out his automatic and fired one merciful shot. Then he too started for the outside. He arrived in the yard perhaps ten seconds behind Handlon.

"Good Heavens, Perry," gibbered Handlon. "I'm not going to stay around this place another minute. Just let me find where I left that suffering camera, that's all I ask."

"Easy now." Perry laid a hand on his companion's shoulder. "I guess we're up against something pretty fierce here, but we're going to see it through, and you know it. So let's cut out the flight talk and go raise the Professor."

Handlon tried earnestly to don a look of determination. If Perry was set on staying here the least he could do was stay with him. However, could Perry have foreseen the events which were to entangle them, he probably would have led the race to the gate. As it was, he grasped a stick and marched bravely up toward the front door.

A SUDDEN commotion behind him caused him to wheel sharply around. Simultaneously a yell burst from Handlon.

"Look out, Horace!"

What he saw almost froze the blood in his veins. From a tumbledown coach house had issued an enormous wolf-hound which was now almost upon them, eyes flaming, fangs gleaming horribly.

So unexpected was the attack that both men stood rooted in their tracks. The next moment the charging brute was upon them, and had bowled Hand-

lon off his equilibrium as if he were a child. The unfortunate photographer made a desperate attempt to prevent injury to his precious camera, which he had but a moment earlier succeeded in retrieving, and in doing so fell rather violently to the ground. Every moment he expected to feel the powerful jaws crunch his throat, and he made no effort to rise. For several seconds he remained thus, until he could endure the suspense no longer. He glanced around only to see Perry, staring open-mouthed at the animal which had so frightened them. Apparently it had forgotten the presence of the two men.

Handlon regained his feet rather awkwardly, the while keeping a watchful eye on the beast, of whose uncertain temper he was by now fully aware. In an undertone he addressed his companion.

"What do you make of it?" he wanted to know. "Did the critter bite you?"

"No. That's the queer part of it. Neither did he bite you, if you were to think it over a minute. Just put his nose down and *rammed* you, head on."

The photographer was flabbergasted. Involuntarily his gaze stole again in the direction of the offending brute.

"What on earth—" he began. "Is he sharpening his teeth on a rock preparatory to another attack upon us? Or—What the deuce *is* he doing?"

"If you ask me," came astonishingly from the watchful Perry, "he's eating grass, which is my idea of something damn foolish for a perfectly normal hound, genus lupo, to be— Look out!"

THE animal, as if suddenly remembering the presence of the men, suddenly charged at them again, head down, eyes blazing. As before, it made no effort to bite. Though both men were somewhat disconcerted by the great brute they held their ground, and when it presented the opportunity the older reporter planted a terrific kick to the flank which sent the animal whimpering back to its shed behind.

"Score one," breathed Handlon. "If we—" At a sudden grating sound overhead he stopped.

Both turned to face the threatening muzzle of an ancient blunderbuss. Behind it was an irate countenance, nearly covered by an unclipped beard of a dirty gray color. In the eyes now glaring at them malevolently through heavily concaved spectacles they read hate unutterable. The barrel of the blunderbuss swung slightly as it covered alternately one and the other. Both sensed that the finger even now tightening on the trigger would not hesitate unduly. Being more or less hardened to rebuffs of all kinds in the pursuance of their calling, the reporters did not hesitate in stating their purpose.

"What?" yelled the old man. "You dare to invade my grounds and disturb me at my labors for such a reason? Reporters! My scientific research work is not for publicity, sirs; and futhermore I want it understood that I am not to be dragged from my laboratory again for the purpose of entertaining you or any others of your ilk. Get away!"

Without further ado the window was slammed down, a shutter closed on the inside, and once more the silence of the dead descended upon the spot. The two men grinned ruefully at each other, Handlon finally breaking the stillness.

"My idea of the world's original one-sided conversation. We simply didn't talk—and yet we're supposed to be reporters. You've got to hand it to the Proff, Horace, for the beautiful rock-crusher he just handed us."

"You didn't think we had anything easy, did you?" said Perry irritably. "He'll change his tune presently, when—"

HANDLON'S jaw dropped. "You don't mean you're going to take any more chances! Would you rouse him again after the way he treated us

with that gun? Besides, the train. . . ."

Perry bent a scathing glance at his companion. "What on earth has the train to do with our getting the Professor's confession of crime or whatever he has to offer? You evidently don't know Bland—much. I deduce that a lot of my sweetness has been wasted on the desert air. Once more, let me assure you that if you propose to go back without the Proff's mug on one of those plates you might as well mail your resignation from *here*. Get me?"

The other wilted.

"I wonder," Perry ruminated as he stared in the direction of the shed wherein the canine monstrosity had disappeared. "Do you suppose that you can get a snap of the old boy's mug if I can get him to the window again? If you can do that, just leave the rest to me. I've handled these crusty birds before. What say?"

"Go as far as you like." The photographer was once more grinning as he unslung his camera and carefully adjusted a plate in place. Everything at last to his satisfaction he gripped flash pan and bulb.

"I'm going to make some racket now," announced Perry grimly. "If Kell shows up, work fast. He may shoot at you, but don't get excited. It's almost dark, so his aim *might* be poor."

At this suggestion his companion showed signs of panic, but the other affected not to notice this. There came a deafening hullaballoo as Perry beat a terrific tattoo on the ancient door. Followed a deep silence, while Perry leaped back to stand in front of Skip and his camera. After perhaps a full minute's wait he once more opened up his bombardment, to jump quickly back to the camera as before. This time he had better success. The window was again opened and the muzzle of the blunderbuss put in its appearance. Handlon stood close behind Perry as he silently swung the camera into a more favorable position for action. The face at the window was purple with wrath.

"You damned pests! Leave my grounds at once or I shall call my hound and set him upon you. And when—"

CRACK! Flash! Click! Perry had made a sudden sidewise movement as Handlon went into action.

"Much obliged, Professor," said Perry politely. "Your pose with that old cannon is going to be very effective from the front page. The write-up will doubtless be interesting too. Probably the story won't be quite so accurate as it would be had you told it to us yourself; but we shall get as many of the details from the natives hereabouts as we can. Good-day to you, sir!"

Motioning to the other he turned on his heel and started down the driveway. It was an old trick, and for a long moment of suspense he almost feared that it would fail. Another moment—

"Wait!" The quavering voice of the irascible old villain had lost some of its malice. "Come back here a minute."

With simulated reluctance the two slowly retraced their steps. "Is there something else, sir?"

"Perhaps. . ." The old man hesitated, as if pondering upon his words. "Perhaps if you care to step in I can be of assistance to you after all. It occurs to me that possibly I have been too abrupt with you."

"I am very glad that you have decided to cooperate with us, Professor Kell," answered the reporter heartily, as they ascended the steps. The old man's head disappeared from the window and shortly the sound of footsteps inside told of his approach. Finally the oaken door swung open, and they were silently ushered into the musty smelling hallway. Though outwardly accepting the Professor's suddenly pacific attitude, Perry made up his mind to be on his guard.

AS they entered what had evidently been the parlor in bygone days, an oppressive, heavy odor smote their nostrils, telling of age-old carpets and of draperies allowed to decay unnoticed. On the walls hung several antique prints, a poorly executed crayon portrait of a person doubtless an ancestor of the present Kell, and one or two paintings done in oil, now badly cracked and stained. Everything gave the impression of an era long since departed, and the two men felt vaguely out of place. Their host led them to a pair of dilapidated chairs, which they accepted gratefully. The ride to Keegan after a hard day's work had not tended to improve their spirits.

"Now to business." Perry went straight to the point, desiring to get the interview over as soon as possible. "We have heard indirectly of various happenings in this vicinity which many think have some connection with your scientific experiments. Any statement you may care to make to us in regard to these happenings will be greatly appreciated by my paper. Inasmuch as what little has already been printed is probably of an erroneous nature, we believe it will be in your own best interest to give us as complete data as possible." Here he became slightly histrionic. "Of course we do not allow ourselves to take the stories told by the local inhabitants too literally, as such persons are too liable to exaggerate, but we must assume that some of these stories have partial basis in fact. Any information relative to your scientific work, incidentally, will make good copy for us also."

Perry gazed steadily at the patriarch as he spoke. For a moment a crafty expression passed over the old man's face, but as suddenly it disappeared. Evidently he had arrived at a decision.

"Come with me," he wheezed.

THE two newspaper men exchanged swift glances, the same thought in the mind of each. Were they about to be led into a trap? If the old man's shady reputation was at all deserved they would do well to be wary. Perry thought swiftly of the clippings he had read and of what gossip he had heard, then glanced once more in the direction of Handlon. That worthy was smiling meaningly and had already arisen to follow the Professor. Reluctantly Perry got to his feet and the three proceeded to climb a rickety stairway to the third floor. The guide turned at the head of the stairs and entered a long dark corridor. Here the floor was covered with a thick carpet which, as they trod upon it, gave forth not the slightest sound.

The hall gave upon several rooms, all dark and gloomy and giving the same dismal impression of long disuse. How could the savant endure such a depressing abode! The accumulation of dust and cobwebs in these long forgotten chambers, the general evidence of decay—all told of possible horrors ahead. They became wary.

But they were not wary enough!

The uncouth figure ahead of them had stopped and was fumbling with the lock of an ancient door. Instinctively Perry noted that it was of great thickness and of heavy oak. Now the Professor had it open and was motioning for them to enter. Handlon started forward eagerly, but hurriedly drew back as he felt the grip of the other reporter's hand on his arm.

"Get back, you fool!" The words were hissed into the ear of the incautious one. Then, to the Professor, Perry observed: "If you have no objection we would prefer that you precede us."

A look of insane fury leaped to the face of the old man, lingered but an instant and was gone. Though the expression was but momentary, both men had seen, and seeing had realized their danger.

THEY followed him into the chamber, which was soon illumined fitfully by a smoky kerosene lamp. Both

took a rapid survey of the place. Conceivably it might have been the scene of scientific experiments, but its aspect surely belied such a supposition. The average imagination would instantly pronounce it the abode of a maniac, or the lair of an alchemist. Again, that it might be the laboratory of an extremely slovenly veterinary was suggested by the several filthy cages to be seen resting against the wall. All of these were unoccupied except one in a dark corner, from which issued a sound of contented purring, evidently telling of some well-satisfied cat.

The air was close and foul, being heavy with the odor of musty, decaying drugs. In every possible niche and cranny the omnipresent dust had settled in a uniform sheen of gray which showed but few signs of recent disturbance.

"Here, gentlemen," their host was saying, "is where I carry on my work. It is rather gloomy here after dark, but then I do not spend much time here during the night. I have decided to acquaint you with some of the details of one or two of my experiments. Doubtless you will find them interesting."

While speaking he had, mechanically it seemed, reached for a glass humidor in which were perhaps a dozen cigars. Silently he selected one and extended the rest to the two visitors.

After all three had puffed for a moment at the weeds, the old man began to talk, rapidly it seemed to them. Perry from time to time took notes, as the old man proceeded, an expression of utter amazement gradually overspreading his face. Handlon pulled away contentedly at his cigar, and on his features there grew an almost ludicrous expression of well-being. Was the simple photographer so completely at ease that he had at length forsaken all thought of possible danger?

As Professor Kell talked on he seemed to warm to his subject. At the end of five minutes he began uncovering a peculiar apparatus which had rested beneath the massive old table before which they were sitting. The two men caught the flash of light on glass, and a jumble of coiled wires became visible.

WAS the air in the laboratory getting unbearably close? Or was the queer leaden feeling that had taken possession of Perry's lungs but an indication of his overpowering weariness? He felt a steadily increasing irritation, as if for some strange reason he suddenly resented the words of their host, which seemed to be pouring out in an endless stream. The cigar had, paradoxically, an oddly soothing quality, and he puffed away in silence.

Why had the room suddenly taken on so hazy an aspect? Why did Handlon grin in that idiotic manner? And the Professor . . he was getting farther and farther away . . that perfecto . . or was it an El Cabbajo? What was the old archfiend doing to him anyhow? . Why was he laughing and leering at them so horribly?

Confound it all . . that cigar . . . where was it? . . . Just one more puff. . .

Blindly he groped for the missing weed, becoming aware of a cackle of amusement nearby. Professor Kell was standing near the spot where he had fallen and now began prodding him contemptuously with his toe.

"Fools!" he was saying. "You thought to interfere with my program. But you are in my power and you have no hope of escape. I am unexpectedly provided with more subjects for my experiments. You will. . . ." His words became hazy and unintelligible, for the hapless reporter was drifting off into a numb oblivion. He had long since lost the power to move a muscle. Out of the corner of an eye, just before he lost consciousness altogether, he perceived Handlon lying upon the floor still puffing at the fateful drugged cigar.

EONS passed.

To the reporter came a vision of a throbbing, glaring inferno, wherein he was shaken and tossed by terrific forces. His very vital essence seemed to respond to a mighty vibration. Now he was but a part of some terrific chaos. Dimly he became aware of another being with whom he must contend. Now he was in a death struggle, and to his horror he found himself being slowly but surely overpowered. A demoniac grin played upon the features of the other as he forced the reporter to his knees. It was Handlon. . . . Once more he was sinking into soft oblivion, the while a horrid miasma assailed his nostrils. He was nothing.

SLOWLY, and with infinite effort, Perry felt himself returning to consciousness, though he had no clear conception of his surroundings. His brain was as yet but a whirling vortex of confused sounds, colors and—yes, odors. A temporary rift came in the mental cloud which fettered his faculties, and things began to take definite shape. He became aware that he was lying upon his back at some elevation from the floor. Again the cloudy incubus closed in and he knew no more.

When he finally recovered the use of his faculties it was to discover himself the possessor of a violent headache. The pain came in such fearsome throbs that it was well nigh unendurable. The lamp still sputtered dimly where the professor had left it. At the moment it was on the point of going out altogether. The reporter noticed this, and over him stole a sense of panic. What if the light should fail altogether, leaving him lying in the dark in this frightful place! Still dizzy and sick, he managed to rise upon his elbows enough to complete a survey of the room. He was still in the laboratory of Professor Kell, but that worthy had disappeared. Of Handlon there was no sign. The mysterious apparatus, of which he now had but a vague remembrance, also had vanished.

His thoughts became confused again, and wearily he passed a hand over his brow in the effort to collect all of his faculties. The lamp began to sputter, arousing him to action. Desperately he fought against the benumbing sensation that was even again stealing over him. Gradually he gained the ascendancy. He struggled dizzily to his feet and took a few tentative steps.

Where was Handlon? He decided his friend had probably recovered from the drug first and was gone, possibly to get a doctor for him, Perry. However, he must make some search to determine if Skip had really left the premises.

As he walked through the open door the lamp in his hand gave a last despairing flicker and went out. From there he was forced to grope his way down the dark hall to the stairs. Just how he reached the lower floor he was never able to remember, for as yet all the effect of the powerful drug had not worn off. He had a dim recollection of being thankful to the ancestor of Kell who had provided such thick carpets in these halls. Thanks to them his footsteps had been noiseless, at any rate.

What was Kell's real object in giving them those drugged cigars? he wondered. How long had they been under the influence of the lethal stuff? Surely several hours. Upon glancing through a hall window he found that outside was the blackness of midnight.

CAUTIOUSLY he explored the desolate chambers on the ground floor: the kitchen—where it could be plainly seen that cooking of a sort had been done—the barn, and woodshed. Not a living thing could he find, not even the huge wolf-hound which had attacked them in so strange a manner that afternoon.

By now he was quite frankly worried on Handlon's account. At that moment, could he have known the actual fate that had overtaken his companion, it is quite probable he would

have gone mad. He stumbled back and into the dark front hall, shouting his friend's name. The response was a hollow echo, and once or twice he thought he heard the ghost of a mocking chuckle.

At length he gave up the search and started for the door, intent now only upon flight from the accursed place. He would report the whole thing to the office and let Bland do what he pleased about it. Doubtless Handlon had already left. Then he stumbled over Handlon's camera. Evidently the Professor had neglected to take possession of it. That must be rescued, at all costs. He picked it up and felt the exposed plate still inside. He started again for the door.

What little light there was faded out and he felt stealing over him a horrid sensation of weakness. Again came a period of agony during which he felt the grip of unseen forces. Once more it seemed that he was engaged in mortal strife with Skip Handlon. Malevolently Handlon glared at him as he endeavored with all his strength to overcome Perry. This time, however, the latter seemed to have more strength and resisted the attack for what must have been hours. Finally the other drew away baffled.

At this the mental incubus surrounding Perry's faculties broke. Dimly he became aware of a grinding noise nearby and a constant lurching of his body. At length his vision cleared sufficiently to enable him to discover the cause of the peculiar sensations.

He was in a railroad coach!

HE took a rapid glance around and noted a drummer sitting in the seat across the aisle, staring curiously at him. With an effort Perry assumed an inscrutable expression and determined to stare the other out of countenance. Reluctantly the man glanced away, and after a moment, under Perry's stony gaze, he suddenly arose and chose a new seat in front of the car. Perry took to the solace of a cigarette and stared out at the flying telegraph poles. From time to time he noted familiar landmarks. The train had evidently left Keegan far behind and was already nearly into the home town.

For the balance of the ride the reporter experienced pure nightmare. The peculiar sensations of dizziness, accompanied by frightful periods of insensibility, kept recurring, now, however, not lasting more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time. At such times as he was conscious he found opportunity to wonder in an abstracted sort of way how he had ever managed to get on the train and pay his fare, which must have been a cash one, without arousing the conductor's suspicions. Discovery of a rebate in his pocket proved that he must have done so, however. The business of leaving the train and getting to the office has always been an unknown chapter in Perry's life.

He came out of one of his mental fogs to find himself seated in the private editorial sanctum of the Journal. Evidently he had just arrived. Bland, a thick-set man with the jaw of a bulldog, was eyeing him intently.

"Well! Any report to make?" The question was crisp.

The reporter passed a hand across his perspiring forehead. "Yes, I guess so. I—er—that is—you see—"

"Where's Handlon? What happened to you? You act as if you were drunk." Bland was not in an amiable mood.

"Search me," Perry managed to respond. "If Skip isn't here old man Kell must have done for him. I came back alone."

"You wha-a-t?" the irate editor fairly roared, half rising from his chair. "Tell me exactly what happened and get ready to go back there on the next train. Or—no, on second thoughts you'd better go to bed. You look all used up. Handlon may be dead or dying at this minute. That Kell could do anything." He pressed the button on his desk.

"Johnny," he said to the office boy,

"get O'Hara in here on the double quick and tell him to bring along his hat and coat."

HE turned again to Perry, who was gazing nervously at the door. "Now tell me everything that happened and make it fast," he ordered.

The reporter complied, omitting nothing except the little matter of his mental lapses at the house of Professor Kell and later on the train. The incident of the drugged cigars seemed to interest the Old Man hugely, and Perry did not forget to play up Handlon's exploits in getting the picture of the Professor. All through the recital he was in a sweat for fear that he might have a recurrence of one of his brain spells and that Bland would become cognizant of it. When would the Chief finish and let him escape from the office? Desperately he fought to prevent the numbing sensation from overcoming him. All that kept him from finally fleeing the place in panic was the entrance of Jimmie O'Hara.

Slight, wiry and efficient looking, this individual was a specimen of the perfect Journal reporter. This is saying a good deal, for the news crew and editorial force of the paper, were a carefully selected body of men indeed. Bland never hired a man unless experience had endowed him with some unusual qualification. Most of them could write up a story with realistic exactitude, being able in most cases to supply details gleaned from actual experience in one walk of life or another.

OF this redoubtable crew probably the queerest was Jimmie O'Hara. Jimmie had just finished a sentence in the "pen" for safe-cracking at the time he landed the job with the Journal. Theoretically all men should have shunned him on account of his jailbird taint. Not so Bland. The Chief was independent in his ideas on the eternal fitness of things and allowed none of the ordinary conventions of humanity to influence his decisions. So Jimmie became one of the staff and worked hard to justify Bland in hiring him. His former profession gave him valuable sidelights upon crime stories of all kinds, and he was almost invariably picked as the man to write these up for the columns.

"Jimmie," said the Chief, "we have need of an experienced strong-arm man and all around second story worker. You are the only man on the force who fills the bill for this job. Perry here has just returned from Keegan, where I sent him to interview Professor Kell. Skip Handlon went with him, but failed to return. We want to know what happened to Skip. That is your job. *Get Handlon!* If he is dead let me know by long distance phone and I'll have a couple of headquarters men down there in a hurry. Get a good fast car and don't waste any time. That's all."

O'Hara stopped long enough to get the location of Professor Kell's place fixed in his mind, then abruptly departed. Bland gazed after him musingly.

"The Professor will have some job to put anything over on that bird," he said grimly. "Personally, I'm sorry for the old soul."

AFTER leaving the Journal office Jimmie proceeded directly to a certain stable where he kept his private car. It was a long, low speedster with a powerful engine, and capable of eating up distance. It was the work of a minute to touch the starter and back out of the yard.

For the next hour he held the wheel grimly while the car roared over the seventy-odd miles to Keegan. Would he be in time? At last a sign post told him that he was within five miles of the railroad crossing at Keegan. Now the headlights were picking out the black outlines of the freight shed, and the next moment he had swept over the tracks. The luminous dial on his wrist watch notified him

that he had been on the road but little over an hour, but his spirits somehow refused to revive with the knowledge.

About a mile beyond the station he drove the car into a dark wood road and parked it, turning off all lights. The rest of the way to the Professor's mansion he did on foot. Rather than approach from the front of the grounds he nimbly climbed a stone wall and, crossing a field or two, entered the stretch of woods which extended just behind the mansion. His pocket flashlight here came into use, and once or twice he gave a reassuring pat to a rear pocket where bulged a heavy Colt automatic.

WHAT was that? He had approached very close to the rear of the house now. No lights were visible as yet, but unless he was greatly mistaken he had heard a muffled scream. He stopped in his tracks and listened intently. Again it came, this time with a blood-curdling cadence ending in what he would have sworn was a choking sob.

The little job of getting the old-fashioned rear window open was a mere nothing to the experienced O'Hara, and in a moment he was inside the house. His feet struck soft carpet. Catlike, he stepped to one side in order to prevent any hidden eyes from perceiving his form silhouetted in the dim light of the open window. He dared not use his flashlight for fear that the circle of light would betray his position, thus making him an excellent target for possible bullets. Following the wall closely he managed to circle the room without mishap. His searching fingers finally came in contact with a door frame, and he breathed a sigh of relief. Here there was nothing to bar his progress except some moth-eaten portieres. These he brushed aside.

The room which he now entered was probably the same into which the Professor had ushered Handlon and Perry the day before. There being still no sign of life about, the reporter decided to throw caution to the winds. He brought his flash into play. Quickly casting the powerful beam around the chamber he examined the place with an all-searching glance.

NOTHING.

With a stifled oath he turned his attention to the other rooms in the immediate vicinity. The brilliant light revealed not the slightest trace of a person, living or dead. The sound must have come from the second story or from the cellar. He decided on the upper floor.

Feverish with impatience because of the valuable time he had already lost, he bounded up the heavily carpeted stairs two at a time. Now to his keen ears came certain faint sounds which told him that he was on the right track. Before him extended a long, dusty hall, terminating in a single heavy door. Several other doors opened at intervals along the corridor. One or two of these were open, and he threw the beam from his flash hastily into one after another of them. He saw only dusty and mildewed chamber furnishings of an ancient massive style.

Suddenly he pricked up his ears.

The door ahead of him was creaking slowly open. Instantly he extinguished his torch and leaped into the nearest room. Whoever was opening that end door was carrying a lamp. What if the Professor had accomplices who might discover him and overpower him by force of numbers! O'Hara drew the automatic from his pocket, deriving a comforting assurance from the feel of the cold steel. Here was something no man could resist could he but get it into action. The light was now nearly abreast of his door, and for a sickening instant he thought the prowler was coming into the room. He held his breath. Now the lamp was at the open door, and now it was quickly withdrawn. After a breathless second he tip-toed forward and peered cautiously down the hallway.

About here it was that James O'Hara

began to realize that this was going to be a horrible night indeed. He had wondered why the progress of the light had been so deathly slow. Now he knew why, by reason of what he saw—and what he saw made him feel rather sick. The man with the lantern was quite plainly Professor Kell, bent nearly double with the weight of a grotesquely big thing on his back, a thing that flung a dim, contorted shadow on the ceiling. And that thing was a dead man.

A CORPSE it was—the attitude proved that. With a numb relief O'Hara realized it was not the body of Skip Handlon. This had been a much larger man than Skip, and the clothing was different from anything Handlon had worn.

The light was now disappearing down the stairway. For a moment O'Hara felt undecided as to his next move. Should he follow Kell and his burden, or should he not take advantage of this fine opportunity to continue his search of the upper story? That scream still rang in his ears; there had been a very evident feminine quality in it, and the remembrance of that fact reproached him. Had he been guilty of mincing daintily about in this old house while a woman was being done to death under his nose, when a little bolder action on his part might have saved her?

Stepping once more into the hall he advanced to the door just closed behind the Professor and tried it, only to find it locked. Out of a pocket came several articles best known to the "profession"—a piece of stiff wire, a skeleton key and other paraphernalia calculated to reduce the obstinate mechanism to submission. For a minute, two, three, he worked at the ancient lock; then, without a creak, the door swung open. A touch of oil to the hinges had insured their silence. Jimmie O'Hara believed in being artistic in his work, especially when it came to fine points, and he was.

HE found himself in the same room where the drugged cigars had been proved the undoing of Handlon and Perry. In order not to alarm the Professor unduly by chance noises and perhaps invite a surprise attack upon himself, O'Hara closed the laboratory door behind him and let the lock spring again. Hastily he made search of the place. No trace of the missing reporter could he find, except two half-consumed cigars in a corner whence the Professor had impatiently kicked them.

On the big table in the center of the room, however, was an object which excited his interest. It was apparently nothing more or less than a giant Crookes tube, connected in some way with a complicated mechanism contained in a wooden cabinet under the table. Probably this apparatus was concerned in the Professor's weird experiments which had so aroused the countryside. He studied it curiously, his eyes for the moment closed in thought, until a slight sound somewhere near at hand caused him to open them wide. Was the Kell returning?

Quickly he extinguished the lamp and glided to a nearby door, thinking to secrete himself here and take Kell by surprise. To his consternation the door swung inward at a touch. He prepared instinctively for battle against any foe who might present himself. For a moment he held himself taut; then, nothing of an alarming nature having happened, he drew a swift breath of relief and flashed on his light. He gave vent to a low exclamation. The swiftly darting shaft from the torch had revealed the figure of a girl, bound and gagged.

THE girl lay trembling on a wretched bed in a corner of the dilapidated old chamber. O'Hara crossed the room and bent over her. Still wary of a trap he glanced back in the direction of the laboratory door; all safe there. Jimmie made haste to remove the cruel gag from her mouth

"Courage," he whispered. "Half a minute and you will be free."

He produced a knife with a suspiciously long blade and cut her bonds. He then assisted her to her feet, where she reeled dizzily. Realizing the need for fast action he made her sit down while he massaged the bruised arms and ankles, which were badly swollen from the tight ropes. The girl had apparently been in the grip of such terrible fright that she had temporarily lost her power of speech. Mentally he chalked up another score against the Professor as the girl made several ineffectual attempts to speak.

"Easy, kid," Jimmie whispered. "Just sit tight, and when you feel able you can tell me all about it. I'm going to get him good for this, you can bank on that."

She thanked him with a faint smile, and of a sudden she found her voice.

"Who are you? Where is father? Oh, tell me, please! I am afraid that horrible man has murdered him. Are you a servant here? Oh, I don't know whom to trust."

"My name is Jimmie O'Hara," replied the reporter briefly; "and I hope you won't worry about me. I am gunning for the Proff myself. Tell me as quickly as you can what you know about him." He still kept an eye on the door of the adjoining laboratory. Any moment he expected to hear the sound of the old man's approach. The room would make an ideal place to ambush the maniac, he had swiftly decided.

"I am Norma Manion. Please don't delay, but see if you can locate father." The girl's voice was agonized. "I heard him groan a half-hour ago, and a little later came a terrific crash. Oh, I'm afraid he's dead!"

RELUCTANTLY Jimmie gave up the idea of ambushing the Professor.

"Wait here," he commanded curtly. "If you hear a shot join me as soon as you can. I want to take him alive if I can, but. . . ." With this parting hint he disappeared through the door into the laboratory. Down the carpeted hall he crept to the stairway. Here he stopped and listened, but to his sensitive ears came no sound from below.

"Must have gone down the cellar with the body," he muttered. "Here goes for a general exploration."

With more boldness than the occasion perhaps really justified he descended the stairs and proceeded to examine the ground floor rooms minutely. The first was the room through which he had made entrance to the house. It proved to be but a storeroom containing nothing of interest, and he soon decided to waste no more time on it.

The adjoining chamber, however, yielded some surprising finds. He had pushed back a dusty portiere to find himself in what could be nothing less than the Professor's sleeping chamber. At present the bed was unoccupied, though it showed signs of recent use. The electric torch played swiftly over every possible corner which could constitute a hiding place for an assassin, revealing nothing. Now the ever-searching ray fell upon an old-fashioned dresser, on which was piled a miscellaneous array of articles. Here were combs, brushes, a wig, a huge magnifying glass, and a gold watch. With a barely suppressed exclamation Jimmie pounced upon the gold timepiece.

Handlon's! So well did he know the particular design of his watch that he could have recognized it in the dark by sense of touch alone. So the old man was not averse to robbery among his other activities! The former two-story man thought fast. Handlon had probably been done in, and the body had been disposed of in some weird manner. The only thing that remained to be done, since the unlucky photographer was evidently past human help, was to cut short the Professor's list of murders.

WITH the intention of missing no essential detail O'Hara swept the ray of the searchlight around the chamber once more, but discovered no more of importance. Deciding that the sleeping chamber could yield no further clue he shut off the tell-tale ray and stepped noiselessly back into the next room. Here he groped his way around until he encountered a door, which stood open. A moment's cautious exploration with an out-stretched foot revealed the top step of a descending staircase. No faintest glimmer of light was visible, but muffled sounds proceeding from the depths told him that someone was below.

With infinite care, feeling his way gingerly over the rickety old steps and fearful that an unexpected creak from one of the ancient boards would at any moment prove his undoing, he commenced the descent. Once a board did groan softly, causing him to stop in his tracks and stand with bated breath. He listened for sign of a movement below, while his heart loudly told off a dozen strokes. Stealthily he continued his progress, until finally soft earth under his feet told him he had reached the cellar bottom.

Now his straining eyes perceived a tiny bit of light, and simultaneously he became conscious of a deathly stench. The damp earth padding his footsteps, he advanced swiftly toward the source of light, which now seemed to lie in stripes across his line of vision. He soon saw that the stairs gave upon a small boarded-off section of the cellar proper, and light was seeping between the boards. Ah, and here was a rickety door, fortuitously equipped with a large knot-hole. O'Hara applied an eye to this—and what he saw nearly ruined even his cast iron nerve.

THE Professor was working beside a heavy wooden cask, from which issued the horrible stench. From time to time a sodden thud told that he was hacking something to pieces with an ax. Now and then he would strain mightily at a dark and bulky thing which lay on the floor, a thing that required considerable strength to lift. It seemed to be getting lighter after each spasm of frenzied chopping. For a second Kell's shadow wavered away from the thing, and the enervated newspaper man saw it plainly. His senses almost left him as he realized that he was witnessing the dismemberment of a human body.

As he hacked the fragments of tissue from the torso the fiend carefully deposited each in the huge cask. At such times a faint boiling sound was heard, and there arose an effluvium that bade fair to overcome even the monster engaged in the foul work. At last the limbs and head had been entirely removed. The Professor evidently decided that the trunk should be left whole, and he put his entire strength into the job of getting it into the cask. It was almost more than he could negotiate, but finally a dull splash told that he had succeeded.

At this moment Jimmie O'Hara came out of his trance. The horrible proceeding had left him faint and shaken, and he wished heartily that he could leave the disgusting place as fast as his legs could carry him. But there was still work to be done and he resolved to get it over.

The lantern! First he must put that out of commission. The maniac would then be at his mercy. Slowly, steadily he stole through the doorway, his eyes glued to the Professor's back. Now he was within a yard of the lantern, and he drew back his foot for the kick.

Next moment Jimmie found himself gazing into the glaring eyes of his intended victim. Instinctively he struck out with the clubbed automatic, but the blow must have fallen short, or else the Professor had developed an uncanny agility. Now to his horror he saw the flashing blade of the blood-stained ax raised on high. He had no time to dodge the blow. He pressed the trigger of the Colt from the position in which he held it.

THE bullet grazed the upraised arm. The ax fell toward O'Hara from fingers lacking strength to retain it, and he grasped it by the handle in mid-air. The next moment the assassin collected his wits and sprang at him. Silently, the breath of both coming in gasps, the two men strove, each clawing desperately at the other's throat. The reporter fought with the knowledge that should he lose he would never again see the light of day, the other with the fear of the justice that would deal with him.

The maniac hugged his arms tightly about Jimmie, pinioning him so tightly that the reporter could not use his gun. At length their convulsive movements brought the men close to the lantern, and the next instant the cellar was plunged in darkness. A second later the Professor tripped over some hidden obstruction and fell, dragging his opponent with him to the earthen floor. To Jimmie's surprise there was no further movement from the body beneath him. Could the old villian be playing possum? He cautiously shifted his hold and grasped the hidden throat. He pressed the Professor's windpipe for a moment, but there was no answering struggle. Slowly the truth dawned upon him. The heavy fall to the floor had rendered the older man insensible.

He must work fast. Reaching into his pocket he brought out the ever handy electric torch and flashed it over the features of his prisoner. Kell was breathing heavily. With dexterous hands the O'Hara swiftly went through the old man's pockets, removing all which might tend to make that worthy dangerous—an ugly looking pistol of large caliber, a blackjack similiar to his own and a small bottle.

The latter item Jimmie examined curiously, finally uncorking it and inhaling the contents. He inhaled, not wisely but too well. The fumes from the vial were nigh overpowering, and he reeled back nauseated. The cork he hastily replaced. Just what the nature of the powerful stuff was he never attempted to discover. One acquaintance was enough.

HE staggered to his feet and got the lantern lighted, then sat, gun in hand, waiting for his prisoner's return to his senses. This was becoming increasingly imminent, judging by certain changes in the Professor's respiration. Finally there came a series of shuddering movements as the man attempted to raise his battered body.

"Get up, you damned butcher," ordered Jimmie, "and march upstairs. And just remember that I've got you covered; don't make any false moves." He prodded the prostrate form of the by now glaring fiend before him. The stench of the place was nearly overcoming him, and again he felt an overwhelming desire to dash madly from that den of evil, and once more breathe God's fresh air. Under the stimulus of several shoves the Professor finally won to his feet and stumbled up the stairs. Jimmie was taking no chances and kept the automatic sharply digging into the ribs of his prisoner. The fight, however, seemed temporarily to have been all taken out of the old man, and he made no resistance as the reporter drove him on up to the laboratory.

The room he found exactly as he left it. At a word from him Norma Manion came from her hiding place in the horrible room where she had been kept prisoner.

With an hysterical scream she fell limply to the floor. The sight of her father's murderer had proved too much for her. Forgetting his prisoner for the moment Jimmie sprang to the girl's side.

Kell chose this moment to make a dash for freedom. His footsteps, however, were not as noiseless as he had intended, and O'Hara whirled just in time to see his quarry about to throw open the hall door. Jimmie dove for his gun, only to encounter the Professor's mysterious vial, which, though

forgotten, still lay in his pocket. With no time to think, he acted purely upon instinct. His arm drew back and the bottle flew straight for the Professor's head.

BY a miracle the missile missed its mark. Came a shivering crash, as the bottle struck a stud in the massive door. Of a sudden recalling the terrific potency of the contents of that particular bottle, Jimmie gasped in dismay. Norma Manion's safety drove every other thought from his mind. At any cost he must remove her from the proximity of those lethal fumes.

Hastily and without a backward glance, he gathered the girl into his arms and dashed into the room where he had first found her. Ascertaining that she had but swooned he placed her gently on the bed. In some perplexity as to his next move he stared at the beautiful face now so wan and white. Queer that he hadn't noticed the fact before—she *was* beautiful. He even took a second look, then noting a continued absence of all sound from the laboratory decided to investigate.

Gingerly he pushed open the door, sniffing the air cautiously as he advanced. To his nostrils gradually came a slight scent, which though almost imperceptible made his senses reel. As he approached the hall door he found the atmosphere heavy with the soporific vapors from the broken vial, and he staggered drunkenly.

He gave a start of surprise. On the floor, lying in a grotesque huddle which suggested a most unpleasant possibility, was the inert body of Professor Kell.

JIMMIE bent over the body and put an experienced ear to the heart. Yes, there as a faint beat—very faint. Even as he listened he perceived a slight increase in the respiration. Now the breath began coming in great, choking gasps, only to die suddenly to next to nothing. At last with a rueful sigh Jimmie reached to his hip and produced the private O'Hara flagon. He stooped over the Professor's form once more and by dint of much prying at clenched jaws managed to force a sizable charge of fiery liquid down the old man's throat. Jimmie had just begun to entertain a strong hope that this latter effort would bring the Professor to life, when his keen ear detected signs of a commotion below.

He sprang from his position over the slowly reviving Kell and leaped to a vantage point beside the door. A blackjack miraculously appeared from some hidden part of his anatomy and the ever-dependable Colt also became in evidence. Now came the banging of a door, muffled voices, a crash as of a chair overturned in the dark. Up rolled a horrible oath, and the same was rendered in a voice to Jimmie sweetly familiar. Came the sound of footsteps on the stairway and several persons coming along the hall.

"Where in hell is Jimmie?" roared a wicked voice. "If he's met with any monkey business in this hell-hole I'll see that the damned place burns to the ground before I leave it!"

DELIGHTEDLY Jimmie jerked open the door.

"Still alive, Chief," he chirped as the Old Man strode into the laboratory. Bland was followed by Perry, who seemed to be in a sort of daze. Bringing up the rear were a pair of plain-clothesmen whom Jimmie knew very well—almost too well. One of these gentlemen bore a lantern which reminded Jimmie strongly of some he had seen that night guarding an open ditch in the public highway.

The Professor had fully regained consciousness and was struggling to his feet. As for Norma Manion, she had suddenly appeared, leaning weakly against the door casing, and was surveying the group in great alarm.

After being assured by O'Hara that they were her friends she smiled wanly. To Bland and the others she was

of course, an unexpected factor in the weird night's doings, and for several moments they regarded her curiously.

At length Jimmie, sensing the question in the Old Man's eyes, elected to offer a few words of explanation.

"Miss Manion has just been through a terrible experience," he said. "She and her father have been for some time at the mercy of this monster"—indicating Kell— "and her nerves are completely shattered. We'd better get her out of this as quickly as we can."

"Mike!" Hard Boiled Bland glared at one of the officers. "Don't stand there with your teeth in your gums like that. Take this girl out to my car and let her lie down. She needs a stimulant, too. If you search my car and find and red liquor in the left back door pocket, I don't know a thing about it. And stay with her so she won't be afraid to go to sleep."

She smiled in silent gratitude and allowed the plainclothesman to lead her away from that chamber of horror.

THE reporter lost no time in telling Bland of his failure to find Skip Handlon. He went on to acquaint his Chief with the facts of all that had occured while he had been at the Professor's house.

The fiery old fellow listened grimly. When Jimmie came to the story of the corpse and the cask the editor breathed one word, "Manion!"

Jimmie nodded sadly. All eyes turned to the dejected huddle on the floor that was Professor Kell. Finally Bland could wait no longer, but fixed a terrible eye on the murderer and demanded harshly, "Where's Handlon?"

Now the Professor burst into a fit of insane laughter, laughter that curdled the blood of the listeners.

"You ask me that! It's almost too good. Hee-hee! You sent your two precious reporters out to my house to pry into my secrets, and thought to display my name all over your yellow sheet; but you forgot that you were dealing with Professor Anton Kell, didn't you?" The last he fairly shrieked. "A lot of people have tried to intrude upon me before, but none ever escaped me!"

"We know that," cut in Jimmie, for he was getting impatient and the old man's boastings seemed out of place. "You are slated for the rope anyway, after what I discovered down cellar." He jerked his eyes in the direction of the door significantly. "Now we propose to find Handlon, and the better it will be for you if you tell us what you have done with him. Otherwise. . . ."

"You can go to hell!" screamed the maniac. "If you are so clever, find out for yourselves. He isn't so far away that you couldn't touch him by reaching out your hand. In fact, he's been with you quite a while. Hee-hee-hee! Well, if you must know—there he is!" With an insane chuckle he pointed at Horace Perry. And Perry did a strange thing.

"Yes, you fiend, here I am!" Whose voice was that? Was it Perry speaking, or was it Skip Handlon? Most assuredly Perry stood before them, but the voice, in a subtle manner, reminded the group strongly of poor old Skip.

AS he spoke Perry had launched himself at the Professor's throat and had to be restrained by the others. Savagely he fought them but slowly and surely they overcame his struggles and placed him, writhing, in a chair.

Of a sudden Bland leaned forward and scrutinized Perry's face sharply. Had the reporter gone insane too? The pupils of the eyes had taken on a sort of queer contraction, a fixed quality that was almost ludicrous. He looked like a man under hypnosis. He had gone limp in their grasp, but now suddenly he stiffened. The eyes underwent another startling change, this time glowing undoubtedly with the look of reason. Bland was mystified and waited for Perry to explain his queer conduct. The latter seemed finally to come to. Simultaneously he realized that his peculiar lapse from

consciousness had been observed by the others.

"Guess I may as well admit it," he said with a wry smile. "Ever since I came back from my assignment with Kell I have had a hell of a time. Half the time I have been in a daze and have not had the least idea what I was doing. Funny part of it is that I have seemed to keep right on doing things even while I was out of my head." He told briefly of the visions he had had in which he had seemed to contend with his brother reporter, the horrid sensations as he felt himself overcome, the black oblivion in which he then found himself, and the mysterious manner in which he had left Keegan on that ill-fated assignment.

"What have you done to Handlon?" Jimmie's voice cut in. He was standing over the form of the maniac, rigid and menacing. "You have exactly two minutes to go."

"Find out for yourself!" snarled the bruised and battered fiend.

"I will," was the answer, and on the instant a horrible shriek rent the air. Jimmie had quickly grasped both of the Professor's arms at the wrists and was slowly twisting them in a grip of iron. Kell's face went white, the lips writhed back over toothless gums, the eyes closed in the supreme effort to withstand the excruciating pain. Then—

"Enough, enough!" he screamed.

O'HARA eased the pressure slightly but retained his hold upon the clawlike hands. "Talk fast," he ordered.

The old man struggled futilely in the grasp of the powerful reporter, finally glancing in the direction of the others. Would they show signs of pity? Surely not Hard Boiled-Bland. The Chief was watching the struggles of the victim through a cloud of tobacco smoke which he was slowly exhaling through his nose. The plain-clothesman displayed no sign of interest at all. The game was up!

"Very well," he said sullenly. "Handlon and Perry are both occupying the same body."

"Wh-a-a-t?" roared Bland. "Jimmie, I guess you'll have to put the screws to him some more. He's trying to make fools of us at the last minute!"

"No, no!" screamed the Professor. "What I say is true. I have been working for years on my system of de-astralization. This last year I at length perfected my electric de-astralizer, which amplifies and exerts the fifth influence of de-cohesion."

The whole party began to look uneasy and gazed apprehensively at the huge Crookes tube which still stood in its supporting frame on the table.

"I have been forced to experiment on animals for the most part," the Professor continued. "I succeeded in de-astralizing a dog and a bull and caused them to exchange bodies. The bodies continued to function. I was enthusiastic. Other experiments took place of which I will not tell you. Finally I began to long for a human subject on which to try my fifth influence."

"Just get down to cases, if you don't mind, Kell." The Chief wanted action. "Suppose you tell us just what you did to Handlon and where we can find him. I may as well mention that your life depends upon it. If we find that you have done for him, something worse than death may happen to you." The tone was menacing. Although Handlon was a comparatively late acquisition to the old Chief's staff, still he had been loyal to the paper.

"When your two damned reporters entered my driveway," Kell resumed, "I saw them coming through a powerful glass which I always have on hand. I had no desire to see them, but they forced themselves upon me. At last I determined that they should furnish material for my experiments.

"IF your men had looked into the grove behind the barn they would have found the automobile which furnished two more subjects I was keep-

ing on hand in a room upstairs. Old Manion and his daughter gave me quite a bit of trouble, but I kept them drugged most of the time. He broke out of the room to-night though, and I had to kill him. It was self defense," he added slyly.

"Anyway, I found it was possible to make two astrals exchange bodies. But I also wanted to see if it were possible to cause two astrals to occupy the same body at the same time, and if so what the result would be. I found out. It was rare sport to watch your star reporter leave my house. He was damned glad to leave, I believe. . . ." Again came the insane cackle.

"Guess we have to believe him whether we want to or not." The detective came to life. "How about making him release Handlon's—what d'ye call it?—astral—from Perry's body?"

"Just a moment." The voice now was unmistakably Handlon's, though it was issuing from the throat of Perry. "In the minute I have in consciousness let me suggest that before you do any more de-astralizing you *locate my body*. Until then, if I am released from this one I am a dead man."

The words struck the group dumb. Where *was* Handlon's body? Could the Professor produce it?

That worthy looked rather haunted at that moment, and they began to see the fear of death coming upon him.

"Mercy, mercy!" he begged as the four men started to advance upon him. "As soon as I had de-astralized Handlon I destroyed his body in my pickling barrel down cellar. But there is another way. . . ." He paused, uncertain as to how his next words would be received. "Go out and get the Manion girl. She can be de-astralized and friend Handlon can have her body."

AT this suggestion, advanced so naïvely, the four men recoiled in horror. It was entirely too much even for Hard Boiled Bland, and he could hardly restrain himself from applying the editorial fist to the leering face before him. Undoubtedly Professor Kell was hopelessly insane, and for that reason he held himself in leash.

"Kell, you are slated to pull off one more stunt," Jimmie addressed the cringing heap. "You know what it is. Get busy. And just remember that I am standing over here"—he indicated a corner well separated from the rest—"with this cannon aimed in your direction. If things aren't just according to Hoyle, you get plugged. Get me?"

"What about it, men?" Bland spoke up. "Is it going to be treating Handlon right to de-astralize him now? It will be his last chance to have a body on this earth."

"Unfortunately that body never belonged to Handlon," said O'Hara. "Hence I fail to see why Perry should be discommoded for the balance of his life with a companion astral. Perry is clearly entitled to his own body, free and unhampered. Friend Skip is out of luck, unless— Well, I don't mind telling you, Kell, that you just gave me an idea. Snap into it now!"

The Professor dragged himself to his feet and under the menace of the automatic fumbled under the table until he had located the intricate apparatus before mentioned.

"Now if Mr. Perry—or Handlon—will kindly recline at full length on this table," he said with an obscene leer, "the experiment will begin."

"Just remember, Kell, this is no experiment," advised Bland, fixing the Professor with an ugly eye. "You do as you're told."

The other made no reply, but threw a hidden switch. Perry, lying flat on his back on the ancient table, suddenly found himself being bathed by what seemed to be a ray of light, and yet was not a ray of light. What was it? It was surely not visible, yet it was tangible. A terrific force was emanating from that devilish globe above him, drawing him out of himself—or—no—was he expanding? Again his ears became filled with confused, horrible sounds, the outlines of the room faded

from sight, he felt a strange sense of inflation . . . of lightness. . . . Oblivion!

FROM where the others sat a gasp of wonder went up. At the first contact of the switch there had been a momentary flash of greenish light within the bulb, and then a swift transition to a beautiful orange. It had then faded altogether, leaving the glass apparently inert and inactive.

But it was not so! The form lying beneath the bulb was evidently being racked with untold tortures. The face became a thing of horror. Now it had twisted into a grotesque semblance of Handlon's—now it again resembled Perry's. The Professor quietly increased the pressure of the current. From the bulb emanated a steel-gray exhalation of what must be termed light, and yet so real it was seemingly material. Assuredly it was not a ray of light as we understand light. It came in great beating throbs, in which the actual vibrations were entirely visible. Under each impact the body of Perry seemed to change, slowly at first, then with increasing speed. The body was now swelled to enormous size. Bland reached forward to touch it.

"This de-cohering influence," the Professor was murmuring, almost raptly, "causes the atoms that go to make a living body repel one another. When the body is sufficiently nebulized, the soul— Back! Back, you fool!" he suddenly shrieked, grasping Bland by the arm. "Do you want to kill him?"

Bland hurriedly retreated, convinced perforce that Kell's alarm was genuine. The editorial fingers had penetrated the subject's garments without resistance and sank into the body as easily as if it were so much soft soap!

THE body continued to expand until at length even the hard-headed plainclothesman realized that it had been reduced to a mere vapor. Within this horrid vaporized body, which nearly filled the room and which had now lost all semblance to a man, could be discerned two faint shapes. Swiftly the Professor extinguished the lantern. The shapes, vague though they were, could be recognized as those of Horace Perry and Skip Hanlon. And they were at strife!

All eyes were now focussed on Professor Kell, who was evidently waiting for something to happen. The two apparitions within the body-cloud were at death grips. One had been overcome and was temporarily helpless. It was that of Handlon. And then again the astral of Perry forcibly ousted that of Handlon from the cloud-cyst. And at that instant Professor Kell shut off the influence-tube.

At once a terrific metamorphosis took place. There came a sharp sound almost like a clap of thunder, with the slight exception that this was occasioned by exactly the reverse effect. Instead of being an explosion it might more properly be termed an *in*plosion, for the mist-cloud suddenly vanished. The de-cohering influence having been removed, the cloud had condensed into the form of Perry. Apparently none the worse, he was even now beginning to recover consciousness. The astral of Handlon was no longer visible, though hovering in the vicinity.

Perry's body was again his own.

AT this time Jimmie O'Hara elected to start something new by hitting the Professor a workmanlike blow on the back of the head with the butt of his automatic. The next thing Bland or anyone else present knew the unconscious body of the Professor was on the table and Jimmie was groping for the concealed switch. At length he found it, and the green flash of light appeared in the bulb, followed by the brilliant orange manifestation.

"What in hell are you doing?" gasped Bland.

"De-astralizing the Professor," replied O'Hara cheerfully. "Don't you get the idea yet? Watch!"

Fascinated, the four men saw the terrific emanation take its baleful effect. As before, the body commenced to expand and gradually took on a misty outline. Larger and larger it grew, until finally it had become a vast cloud of intangible nothingness which filled the room like some evil nebula.

A cry of consternation from the detective aroused Jimmie. Skip Handlon's astral had appeared within the field of the nebula to fight for possession. There ensued what was perhaps the weirdest encounter ever witnessed. Though he was in poor physical shape, the Professor seemed to have an extremely powerful astral; and for some time the spectators despaired of Handlon's victory. Once the latter, evidently realizing that the powerful influence tube had rendered him visible, glanced sharply in Jimmie's direction. O'Hara was considerably puzzled at this, but watched the progress of the struggle tensely. At length the moment seemed to arrive which the reporter's astral had been awaiting. It turned tail and fled away from the astral of the Professor, disappearing beyond the outer confines of the nebula.

Jimmie suddenly divined the other's purpose and dived for the hidden switch. As he had anticipated, Handlon had finally given up the attempt to overcome the astral of Kell by force and had made up his mind to accomplish his end by strategy. Almost on the instant that Jimmie's hand closed on the switch the reporter's astral again leaped into the field of the nebula. Fiercely it signalled to the former second story man to shut off the current, but the admonition was unnecessary, for Jimmie had already done so.

SWIFTLY the cloud-cyst faded. Even as the group caught a fleeting sight of Skip Handlon, the last that mortal eyes would ever see of him as he actually was, there came a violent disturbance at the edge of the shrinking nebula. Would the speed of condensation of the atoms which comprised the body of Professor Kell serve to shut out the pursuing astral of Kell?

Even Bland held his breath!

The cloud lost its luminous quality, the action of condensation increasing in speed. It was barely visible in the enshrouding gloom. An astral had long since been enveloped within the rapidly accumulating substance. Came a sudden clap of sound as before, and the final act of resolution had been accomplished. Whether the Professor had succeeded in regaining a position within the cloud-cyst before the crucial second none could say.

Jimmie relighted the lantern. Apparently the effect of the love tap administered by his automatic was more or less of a lasting character, and the men were put to some ado to restore the body of Kell to consciousness. At length their efforts began to bear fruit, however, and it became expedient to remove the patient to the softer couch in the sitting room below. As they moved forward to lay hold of the limp body a figure appeared in the doorway to the hall. It was the plainclothesman, Riley.

"How about getting under way for town," he wanted to know. "Is the old party croaked yet? Miss Manion has had a fierce time and says she won't stay near this house another minute. I don't like this place myself either. Do you know I just got kicked by a poll parrot? Let's get away from here."

"Hold on, Riley, what are you talking about?" growled Bland. "Kicked by a poll parrot! You're—"

"That's all right, Chief," broke in the now thoroughly cheerful Perry. "That jackass I shot could probably have told us all about it. I positively know the beast could talk."

"Humph!" snorted Bland. "Well, if a donkey can talk, and a bull can bite, and a hound can hook, why shouldn't a parrot—Judas Priest, I'm getting as crazy as the rest of you! Hurry up and get Kel downstairs so we can see

who he is. There I go again! Oh, go lie down, Riley."

"But look, Bland, look!" Riley was pointing a demoralized finger at a cage in the corner. He tugged frantically at Bland's coat sleeve. "See what's in there, won't you?. I—well, I did find some liquor in your car, and Miss Manion made me take some. I—I didn't know it would do this to me. Look in there; please, Mr. Bland!"

BLAND gave Riley a dark look, but nevertheless he reached for O'Hara's flashlight. In the cage two yellow eyes blinked sleepily out at him. Perry began to laugh.

"Why, there's nothing in there but a cat. Skip and I heard it purring when we first came in here this afternoon. Guess Riley—"

"Great God, Jimmie, give me your gun!" Hard Boiled Bland for the moment failed to merit his sobriquet. The torch in his hand threw a trembling beam full into the cage. "It's a snake! And—there! It's doing it again!"

A snake it was, indubitably, a huge black specimen with bright yellow stripes. Bland's frenzied yell seemed not to have excited it at all, for now the sleek fellow had arched its body neatly and was calmly licking its sides with a long forked tongue. After a moment it halted the operation long enough to rub its jaw against a bar of its cage, and gave vent to a sociable mew!

Even this could not dash the spirits of Horace Perry. He laughed delightedly again as he laid Bland by the arm.

"That creature is perfectly harmless, Chief," he told the editor. "Somewhere I suppose there's a mighty dangerous kitty cat at large, but there's no sense in taking it out on this poor reptile. Let's live and let live."

With a show of reluctance Bland returned Jimmie's automatic, then strode over to where lay the form of Kell. Perry and O'Hara lingered by the cage long enough to arrange a plan to let the snake out doors as soon as opportunity offered, after which they joined their Chief. Riley went out to resume his vigil in Bland's car, while his fellow sleuth prepared to light the way downstairs. Under his guidance the sick man was carried below without mishap.

Downstairs the now conscious form of the venerable Professor was laid out on the ancient sofa until his senses should clear a bit. Presently the eyelids fluttered open and a feeble voice asked, "Where the deuce am I, and how did all you guys get here?"

A JOYOUS gasp went up. That voice! Although uttered in somewhat the same vocal quality as Kell's the intonation and accents had strangely altered. O'Hara leaned eagerly over the figure on the couch. The question he asked was startling in its incongruity:

"How are you feeling, *Skip!*"

"Rotton," was the reply from the lips of Kell. "What hit me such a crack on the dome? I feel as if I had been dragged through a knot-hole. Lemme up."

"Stay still," commanded O'Hara, kindly but firmly. "You aren't fit to move yet. You are going on a long ride and will need your strength. Don't talk, either."

A half-hour later they left the house. In the front yard the editor called a hasty conclave which included the entire party. Hard Boiled Bland has never been known to talk so much at a stretch, before or since.

"Before we start back," he began, "we had better come to an understanding. In the first place—Skip, come over here a minute."

Norma Manion uttered an involuntary cry of fear as the aged form of Kell passed by her. Skip's instant response to his name had, of course, been perfectly natural to him. But it had an odd effect on the others.

"Miss Manion, and gentlemen," Bland went on, with a bow of mock ceremony, "I want you to meet Mister —er, Mister—oh hell, call him Saunders. This is Mr. Kenneth Saunders,

ladies and gentlemen. When he gets a shave and has his new face patched up I believe you will like his appearance much more than you do now.

"Seriously though, folks, I hope that with a little fixing up the gentleman will hardly resemble Professor Anton Kell. Kell is dead. Obviously, however, this gentleman can hardly continue his existence as Skip Handlon. Hence—well, hence Mr. Saunders. And don't forget the name.

"Now another little matter. This house has proven a curse to humanity. What has transpired here need never be known. Would it not be the wiser to eliminate all traces of to-night's happenings? There is a way." He looked significantly at the others.

"YOU mean—" began Perry.

"That we destroy all traces of Professor Kell's villainy. Although he is no more, still someone might notice that *his body actively remains.* And no one wants to do any explaining."

"It's the only way we can protect Handlon," one of the sleuths ruminated, half to himself. "No judge would ever believe a word about this de-astralization business. The chances are we would all go to the booby hatch and Handlon would go to prison for Kell's crimes."

"There were four of us that witnessed the fact of the—the soul transfusion, though," Perry objected. "Wouldn't that be enough to clear Skip? Besides, wouldn't it be possible for us to lead a jury out here and duplicate the experiment?"

"Too much undesirable publicity," growled Bland, who for once in his life had found reason to keep something good out of the headlines. "What do you say, people?"

"I move we move," from the detective who had had the uncomfortable job of attending to Norma Manion.

"Gentlemen, I believe we understand each other," said Jimmie quietly. "Now I am going into the barn"—significantly—"to see if everything's all right. While I am there something *might* happen. You understand?"

The others nodded silent assent.

IN the snug seat of Jimmie's speedster Norma Manion shivered as she followed the direction indicated by her companion's finger. It was that darkest hour which comes just before the dawn.

To the westward could be perceived a dull, red glow, which, even as they watched with fascinated eyes, developed into an intense glare. Gradually the fading stars became eclipsed in the greater glory.

Three cars, motors throbbing as if eager to be gone, stood a space apart on the main road. The car behind O'Hara's was the Manion machine, now occupied by Bland and Riley. The remaining one was a touring car and contained the balance of the party. Perry was at the wheel, and beside him sat the Handlon-Kell-Saunders combination.

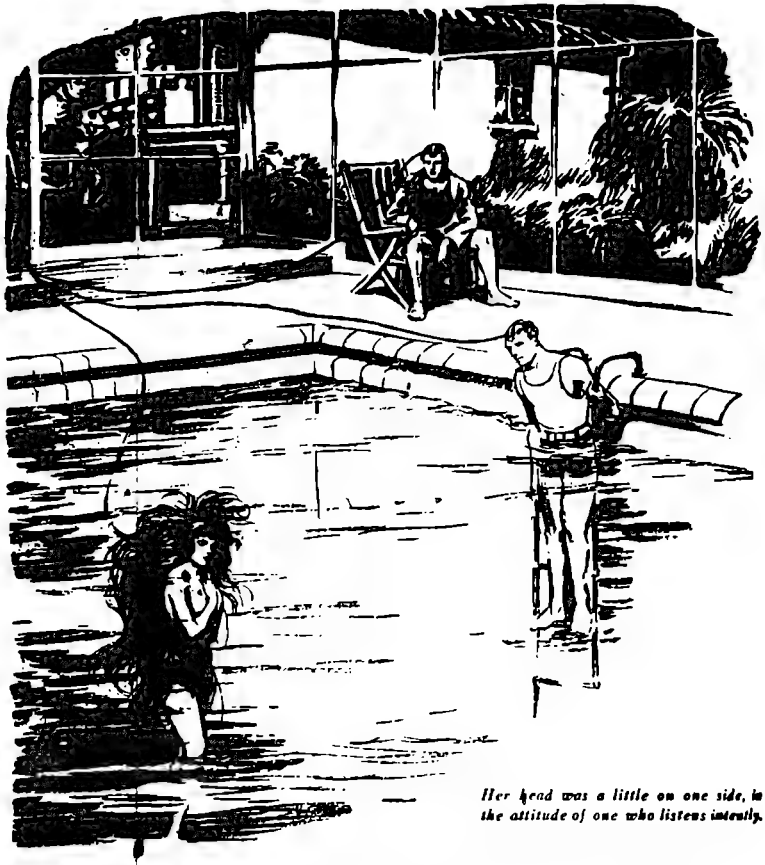
"Thus passes a den of horror," whispered Jimmie to his companion.

"It is the funeral pyre of my father," the girl answered simply. She had long since recovered from her initial outburst of grief at her loss, and now watched the progress of the conflagration dry-eyed. At length Jimmie slipped an arm protectingly about the trembling shoulders.

"You have seen enough," he said. As the three cars raced from the scene of the holocaust, faint streamers in the east told of the rising orb of day.

"Good-by, Keegan, forever," murmured Norma.

"Amen," O'Hara devoutedly agreed.



Her head was a little on one side, in the attitude of one who listens intently.

From the Ocean's Depths

By Sewell Peaslee Wright

FROM somewhere out on the black, heaving Atlantic, the rapid, muffled popping of a speed-boat's exhaust drifted clearly through the night.

I dropped my book and stretched, leaning back more comfortably in my chair. There was real romance and adventure! Rum-runners, seeking out their hidden port with their cargo of contraband from Cuba. Heading fearlessly through the darkness, fighting the high seas, still running after the storm of a day or so before, daring a thousand dangers for the sake of the straw-

Man came from the sea. Mercer, by his thought-telegraph, learns from the weirdly beautiful ocean-maiden of a branch that returned there.

packed bottles they carried. Sea-bronzed men, with hard, flat muscles and fearless eyes; ready guns slapping their thighs as they—

Absorbed in my mental picture of these modern free-booters, the sudden alarm of the telephone startled me like an unexpected shot fired beside my ear. Brushing the cigarette ashes from my smoking-jacket, I crossed the room and snatched up the receiver.

"Hello!" I snapped ungraciously into the mouthpiece. It was after eleven by the ship's clock on the mantel, and if—

"Taylor?" The voice—Warren Mercer's familiar voice—rattled on without waiting for a reply. "Get in your car and come down here as fast as possible. Come just as you are, and—"

"WHAT'S the matter?" I managed to interrupt him. "Burglars?" I had never heard Mercer speak in that high-pitched, excited voice before; his usual speech was slow and thoughtful, almost didactic.

"Please, Taylor, don't waste time questioning me. If it weren't urgent, I wouldn't be calling you, you know. Will you come?"

"You bet!" I said quickly, feeling rather a fool for ragging him when he was in such deadly earnest. "Have—"

The receiver snapped and crackled; Mercer had hung up the instant he had my assurance that I would come. Usually the very soul of courtesy and consideration, that act alone would have convinced me that there was an urgent need for my presence at The Monstrosity. That was Mercer's own name for the impressive pile that was at once his residence and his laboratory.

I threw off the smoking-jacket and pulled on a woolen golfing sweater, for the wind was brisk and sharpish. In two minutes I was backing the car out of the garage; a moment later I was off the gravelled drive and tearing down the concrete with the accelerator all the way down, and the black wind shrieking around the windshield of my little roadster.

My own shack was out of the city limits—a little place I keep to live in when the urge to go fishing seizes me, which is generally about twice a year. Mercer picked the place up for me at a song.

The Monstrosity was some four miles further out from town, and off the highway perhaps a half-mile more.

I made the four miles in just a shade over that many minutes, and clamped on the brakes as I saw the entrance to the little drive that led towards the sea, and Mercer's estate.

WITH gravel rattling on my fenders, I turned off the concrete and swept between the two massive, stuccoed pillars that guarded the drive. Both of them bore corroded bronze plates, "The Billows," the name given The Monstrosity by the original owner, a newly-rich munitions manufacturer.

The structure itself loomed up before me in a few seconds, a rambling affair with square-shouldered balconies and a great deal of wrought-iron work, after the most flamboyant Spanish pattern. It was ablaze with light. Apparently every bulb in the place was burning.

Just a few yards beyond the surf boomed hollowly on the smooth, shady shore, littered now, I knew, by the pitiful spoils of the storm.

As I clamped on my brakes, a swift shadow passed two of the lower windows. Before I could leap from the car, the broad front door, with its rounded top and circular, grilled window, was flung wide, and Mercer came running to meet me.

He was wearing a bathrobe, hastily flung on over a damp bathing suit, his bare legs terminating in a pair of disreputable slippers.

"Fine, Taylor!" he greeted me. "I suppose you're wondering what it's all about. I don't blame you. But come in, come in! Just wait till you see her!"

"Her?" I asked, startled. "You're not in love, by any chance, and bringing me

down here like this merely to back up your own opinion of them eyes and them lips, Mercer?"

HE laughed excitedly.

"You'll see, you'll see! No, I'm not in love. And I want you to help, and not admire. There are only Carson and myself here, you know, and the job's too big for the two of us." He hurried me across the broad concrete porch and into the house. "Throw the cap anywhere and come on!"

Too much amazed to comment further, I followed my friend. This was a Warren Mercer I did not know. Usually his clean-cut, olive-tinted face was a polite mask that seldom showed even the slightest trace of emotion. His eyes, dark and large, smiled easily, and shone with interest, but his almost beautiful mouth, beneath the long slim mustache, always closely cropped, seldom smiled with his eyes.

But it was his present excited speech that amazed me most. Mercer, during all the years I had known him, had never been moved before to such tempestuous outbursts of enthusiasm. It was his habit to speak slowly and thoughtfully, in his low, musical voice; even in the midst of our hottest arguments, and we had had many of them, his voice had never lost its calm, unhurried gentleness.

To my surprise, instead of leading the way to the really comfortable, although rather gaudy living room, Mercer turned to the left, towards what had been the billiard room, and was now his laboratory.

The laboratory, brilliantly illuminated, was littered, as usual, with apparatus of every description. Along one wall were the retorts, scales, racks, hoods and elaborate set-ups, like the articulated glass and rubber bones of some weird prehistoric monster, that demonstrated Mercer's taste for this branch of science. On the other side of the room a corresponding workbench was littered with a tangle of coils, transformers, meters, tools and instruments, and at the end of the room, behind high black control panels, with gleaming bus-bars and staring, gaping meters, a pair of generators hummed softly. The other end of the room was nearly all glass, and opened onto the patio and the swimming pool.

MERCER paused a moment, with his hand on the knob of the door, a strange light in his dark eyes.

"Now you'll see why I called you here," he said tensely. "You can judge for yourself whether the trip was worth while. Here she is!"

With a gesture he flung open the door, and I stared, following his glance, down at the great tiled swimming pool.

It is difficult for me to describe the scene. The patio was not large, but it was beautifully done. Flowers and shrubs, even a few small palms, grew in profusion in the enclosure, while above, through the movable glass roof —made in sections to disappear in fine weather—was the empty blackness of the sky.

None of the lights provided for the illumination of the covered patio was turned on, but all the windows surrounding the patio were aglow, and I could see the pool quite clearly.

The pool—and its occupant.

WE were standing at one side of the pool, near the center. Directly opposite us, seated on the bottom of the pool, was a human figure, nude save for a great mass of tawny hair that fell about her like a silken mantle. The strangely graceful figure of a girl, one leg stretched out straight before her, the other drawn up and clasped by the interlocked fingers of her hands. Even in the soft light I could see her perfectly, through the clear water, her pale body outlined sharply against the jade green tiles.

I tore myself away from the staring, curious eyes of the figure.

"In God's name, Mercer, what is it? Porcelain?" I asked hoarsely. The thing had an indescribably eery effect.

He laughed wildly.

"Porcelain? Watch . . . *look!*"

My eyes followed his pointing finger. The figure was moving. Gracefully it arose to its full height. The great cloud of corn-colored hair floated down about it, falling below the knees. Slowly, with a grace of movement comparable only with the slow soaring of a gull, she came toward me, walking on the bottom of the pool through the clear water as though she floated in air.

FASCINATED, I watched her. Her eyes, startlingly large and dark in the strangely white face, were fixed on mine. There was nothing sinister in the gaze, yet I felt my body shaking as though in the grip of a terrible fear. I tried to look away, and found myself unable to move. I felt Mercer's tense, sudden grip upon my arm, but I did not, could not, look at him.

"She—she's smiling!" I heard him exclaim. He laughed, an excited, high-pitched laugh that irritated me in some subtle way.

She was smiling, and looking up into my eyes. She was very close now, within a few feet of us. She came still closer, until she was at my very feet as I stood on the raised ledge that ran around the edge of the pool, her head thrown back, staring straight up at me through the water.

I could see her teeth, very white between her coral-pink lips, and her bosom rising and falling beneath the veil of pale gold hair. She was breathing *water!*

Mercer literally jerked me away from the edge of the pool.

"What do you think of her, Taylor?" he asked, his dark eyes dancing with excitement.

"Tell me about it," I said, shaking my head dazedly. "She is not human?"

"I don't know. I think so. As human as you or I. I'll tell you all I know, and then you can judge for yourself. I think we'll know in a few minutes, if my plans work out. But first slip on a bathing suit."

I didn't argue the matter. I let Mercer lead me away without a word. And while I was changing, he told me all he knew of the strange creature in the pool.

"LATE this afternoon I decided to go for a little walk along the beach," Mercer began. "I had been working like the devil since early in the morning, running some tests on what you call my thought-telegraph. I felt the need of some fresh sea air.

"I walked along briskly for perhaps five minutes, keeping just out of reach of the rollers and the spray. The shore was littered with all sorts of flotsam and jetsam washed up by the big storm, and I was just thinking that I would have to have a man with a truck come and clean up the shore in front of the place, when, in a little sandy pool, I saw—*her.*

"SHE was lying face down in the water, motionless, her head towards the sea, one arm stretched out before her, and her long hair wrapped around her like a half-transparent cloak.

"I ran up and lifted her from the water. Her body was cold, and deathly white, although her lips were faintly pink, and her heart was beating, faintly but steadily.

"Like most people in an emergency, I forgot all I ever knew about first aid. All I could think of was to give her a drink, and of course I didn't have a flask on my person. So I picked her up in my arms and brought her to the house as quickly as I could. She seemed to be reviving, for she was struggling and gasping when I got here with her.

"I placed her on the bed in the guest room and poured her a stiff drink of Scotch—half a tumblerful, I believe. Lifting up her head, I placed the glass to her lips. She looked up at me, blinking, and took the liquor in a single draught. She did not seem to drink it, but sucked it out of the glass in a single amazing gulp—that's the only

word for it. The next instant she was off the bed, her face a perfect mask of hate and agony.

"She came at me, hands clutching and clawing, making odd murmuring or mewing sounds in her throat. It was then that I noticed for the first time that her hands were webbed!"

"WEBBED?" I asked, startled. "Webbed," nodded Mercer solemnly. "As are her feet. But listen, Taylor. I was amazed, and not a little rattled when she came for me. I ran through the French windows out into the patio. For a moment she ran after me, rather awkwardly and heavily, but swiftly, nevertheless. Then she saw the pool.

"Apparently forgetting that I existed, she leaped into the water, and as I approached a moment later I could see her breathing deeply and gratefully, a smile of relief upon her features, as she lay upon the bottom of the pool. Breathing, Taylor, on the bottom of the pool! Under eight feet of water!"

"And then what, Mercer?" I reminded him, as he paused, apparently lost in thought.

"I tried to find out more about her. I put on my bathing suit and dived into the pool. Well, she came at me like a shark, quick as a flash, her teeth showing, her hands tearing like claws through the water. I turned, but not quickly enough to entirely escape. See?" Mercer threw back the dressing robe, and I saw a ragged tear in his bathing suit on his left side, near the waist. Through the rent three deep, jagged scratches were clearly visible.

"SHE managed to claw me, just once," Mercer resumed, wrapping the robe about him again. "Then I got out and called on Carson for help. I put him into a bathing suit, and we both endeavored to corner her. Carson got two bad scratches, and one rather serious bite that I have bandaged. I have a number of lacerations, but I didn't fare so badly as Carson because I am faster in the water than he is.

"The harder we tried, the more determined I became. She would sit there, calm and placid, until one of us entered the water. Then she became a veritable fury. It was maddening.

"At last I thought of you. I phoned, and here we are!"

"But, Mercer, it's a nightmare!" I protested. We moved out of the room. "Nothing human can live under water and breathe water, as she does!"

Mercer paused a moment, staring at me oddly.

"The human race," he said gravely, "came up out of sea. The human race as we know it. Some may have gone back." He turned and walked away again, and I hurried after him.

"What do you mean, Mercer? 'Some may have gone back?' I don't get it."

Mercer shook his head, but made no other reply until we stood again on the edge of the pool.

The girl was standing where we had left her, and as she looked up into my face, she smiled again, and made a quick gesture with one hand. It seemed to me that she invited me to join her.

"I BELIEVE she likes you, Taylor," said Mercer thoughtfully. "You're light, light skin, light hair. Carson and I are both very dark, almost swarthy. And in that white bathing suit—yes, I believe she's taken a fancy to you!"

Mercer's eyes were dancing.

"If she has," he went on, "it'll make our work very easy."

"What work?" I asked suspiciously. Mercer, always an indefatigable experimenter, was never above using his friends in the benefit of science. And some of his experiments in the past had been rather trying, not to say exciting.

"I think I have what you call my thought-telegraph perfected, experimentally," he explained rapidly. "I fell asleep working on it at three o'clock, or thereabouts, this morning, and some

tests with Carson seem to indicate that it is a success. I should have called you to-morrow, for further tests. Nearly five years of damned hard work to a successful conclusion, Taylor, and then this mermaid comes along and makes my experiment appear about as important as one of those breakers rolling in out there!"

"And what do you plan to do now?" I asked eagerly, glancing down at the beautiful pale face that glimmered up at me through the clear water of the pool.

"WHY, try it on her!" exclaimed Mercer with mounting enthusiasm. "Don't you see, Taylor? If it will work on her, and we can direct her thoughts, we can find out her history, the history of her people! We'll add a page to scientific history—a whole big chapter!—that will make us famous. Man, this is so big it's swept me off my feet! Look!" And he held out a thin, aristocratic brown hand before my eyes, a hand that shook with nervous excitement.

"I don't blame you," I said quickly. "I'm no savant, and still I see what an amazing thing this is. Let's get busy. What can I do?"

Mercer reached around the door into the laboratory and pressed a button.

"For Carson," he explained. "We'll need his help. In the meantime, we'll look over the set-up. The apparatus is strewn all over the place."

He had not exaggerated. The set-up consisted of a whole bank of tubes, each one in its own shielding copper box. On a much-drilled horizontal panel, propped up on insulators, were half a score of delicate meters of one kind and another, with thin black fingers that pulsed and trembled. Behind the panel was a tall cylinder wound with shining copper wire, and beside it another panel, upright, fairly bristling with knobs, contact points, potentiometers, rheostats and switches. On the end of the table nearest the door was still another panel, the smallest of the lot, bearing only a series of jacks along one side, and in the center a switch with four contact points. A heavy, snaky cable led from this panel to the maze of apparatus further on.

"THIS is the control panel," explained Mercer. "The whole affair, you understand, is in laboratory form. Nothing assembled. Put the different antennae plug into these jacks. Like this."

He picked up a weird, hastily built contrivance composed of two semi-circular pieces of spring brass, crossed at right angles. On all four ends were bright silvery electrodes, three of them circular in shape, one of them elongated and slightly curved. With a quick, nervous gesture, Mercer fitted the thing to his head, so that the elongated electrode pressed against the back of his neck, extending a few inches down his spine. The other three circular electrodes rested on his forehead and either side of his head. From the center of the contrivance ran a heavy insulated cord, some ten feet in length, ending in a simple switchboard plug, which Mercer fitted into the uppermost of the three jacks.

"Now," he directed, "you put on this one"—he adjusted a second contrivance upon my head, smiling as I shrank from the contact of the cold metal on my skin—"and think!"

He moved the switch from the position marked "Off" to the second contact point, watching me intently, his dark eyes gleaming.

Carson entered, and Mercer gestured to him to wait. Very nice old chap, Carson, impressive even in his bathing suit. Mercer was mighty lucky to have a man like Carson. . . .

SOMETHING seemed to tick suddenly, somewhere deep in my consciousness.

"Yes, that's very true: Carson is a most decent sort of chap." The words were not spoken. I did not *hear* them, I *knew* them. What—I glanced at Mer-

cer, and he laughed aloud with pleasure and excitement.

"It worked!" he cried. "I received your thought regarding Carson, and then turned the switch so that you received my thought. And you did!"

Rather gingerly I removed the thing from my head and laid it on the table.

"It's wizardry, Mercer! If it will work as well on *her*. . . ."

"It will, I know it will!—if we can get her to wear one of these," replied Mercer confidently. "I have only three of them; I had planned some three-cornered experiments with you, Carson, and myself. We'll leave Carson out of to-night's experiment, however, for we'll need him to operate this switch. You see, as it is now wired only one person transmits thoughts at a time. The other two receive. When the switch is on the first contact, Number One sends, and Numbers Two and Three receive. When the switch is on Number Two, then he sends thoughts, and Numbers One and Three receive them. And so on. I'll lengthen these leads so that we can run them out into the pool, and then we'll be ready. Somehow we must induce her to wear one of these things, even if we have to use force. I'm sure the three of us can handle her."

"We should be able to," I smiled. She was such a slim, graceful, almost delicate little thing; the thought that three strong men might not be able to control her seemed almost amusing.

"You haven't seen her in action yet," said Mercer grimly, glancing up from his work of lengthening the cords that led from the antennae to the control panel. "And what's more, I hope you don't."

I WATCHED him in silence as he spliced and securely taped the last connection.

"All set," he nodded. "Carson, will you operate the switch for us? I believe everything is functioning properly." He surveyed the panel of instruments hastily, assuring himself that every reading was correct. Then, with all three of the devices he called antennae in his hand, their leads plugged into the control panel, he led the way to the side of the pool.

The girl was strolling around the edge of the pool, feeling the smooth tile sides with her hands as we came into view, but as soon as she saw us she shot through the water to where we were standing.

It was the first time I had seen her move in this fashion. She seemed to propel herself with a sudden mighty thrust of her feet against the bottom; she darted through the water with the speed of an arrow, yet stopped as gently as though she had merely floated there.

As she looked up, her eyes unmistakably sought mine, and her smile seemed warm and inviting. She made again that strange little gesture of invitation.

With an effort I glanced at Mercer. There was something devilishly fascinating about the girl's great, dark, searching eyes.

"I'm going in," I said hoarsely. "Hand me one of your head-set things when I reach for it." Before he could protest, I dived into the pool.

I HEADED directly towards the heavy bronze ladder that led to the bottom of the pool. I had two reasons in mind. I would need something to keep me under water, with my lungs full of air, and I could get out quickly if it were necessary. I had not forgotten the livid, jagged furrows in Mercer's side.

Quickly as I shot to the ladder she was there before me, a dim, wavering white shape, waiting.

I paused, holding to a rung of the ladder with one hand. She came closer, walking with the airy grace I had noted before, and my heart pounded against my ribs as she raised one long, slim arm towards me.

The hand dropped gently on my shoulder, pressed it as though in token

of friendship. Perhaps, I thought quickly, this was, with her, a sign of greeting. I lifted my own arm and returned the salutation, if salutation it were, aware of a strange rising and falling sound, as of a distant humming, in my ears.

The sound ceased suddenly, on a rising note, as though of inquiry, and it dawned on me that I had heard the speech of this strange creature. Before I could think of a course of action, my aching lungs reminded me of the need of air, and I released my hold on the ladder and let my body rise to the surface.

AS my head broke the water, a hand, cold and strong as steel, closed around my ankle. I looked down. The girl was watching me, and there was no smile on her face now.

"All right!" I shouted across the pool to Mercer, who was watching anxiously. Then, filling my lungs with air again, I pulled myself, by means of the ladder, to the bottom of the pool. The restraining hand was removed instantly.

The strange creature thrust her face close to mine as my feet touched bottom, and for the first time I saw her features distinctly.

She was beautiful, but in a weird, unearthly sort of way. As I had already noticed, her eyes were of unusual size, and I saw now that they were an intense shade of blue, with a pupil of extraordinary proportion. Her nose was well shaped, but the nostrils were slightly flattened, and the orifices were rather more elongated than I had ever seen before. The mouth was utterly fascinating, and her teeth, revealed by her engaging smile, were as perfect as it would be possible to imagine.

The great mane of hair which enveloped her was, as I have said, tawny in hue, and almost translucent, like the stems of some seaweeds I have seen. And as she raised one slim white hand to brush back some wisps that floated by her face, I saw distinctly the webs between her fingers. They were barely noticeable, for they were as transparent as the fins of a fish, but they were there, extending nearly to the last joint of each finger.

AS her face came close to my own, I became aware of the humming, crooning sound I had heard before, louder this time. I could see, from the movement of her throat, that I had been correct in assuming that she was attempting to speak with me. I smiled back at her and shook my head. She seemed to understand, for the sound ceased, and she studied me with a little thoughtful frown, as though trying to figure out some other method of communication.

I pointed upward, for I was feeling the need for fresh air again, and slowly mounted the ladder. This time she did not grasp me, but watched me intently, as though understanding what I did, and the reasons for it.

"Bring one of your gadgets over here, Mercer," I called across the pool. "I think I'm making progress."

"Good boy!" he cried, and came running with two of the antennae, the long insulated cords trailing behind him. Through the water the girl watched him, evident dislike in her eyes. She glanced at me with sudden suspicion as Mercer handed me the two instruments, but made no hostile move.

"You won't be able to stay in the water with her," explained Mercer rapidly. "The salt water would short the antennae, you see. Try to get her to wear one, and then you get your head out of water, and don yours. And remember, she won't be able to communicate with us by words—we'll have to get her to convey her thoughts by means of mental pictures. I'll try to impress that on her. Understand?"

I NODDED, and picked up one of the instruments. "Fire when ready, Gridley," I commented, and sank again to the bottom of the pool.

I touched the girl's head with one

finger, and then pointed to my own head, trying to convey to her that she could get her thoughts to me. Then I held up the antennae, and placed it on my own head to show that it could not harm her.

My next move was to offer her the instrument, moving slowly, and smiling reassuringly — no mean feat under water.

She hesitated a moment, and then, her eyes fixed on mine, she slowly fixed the instrument over her own head as she had seen me adjust it upon my own.

I smiled and nodded, and pressed her shoulder in token of friendly greeting. Then, gesturing toward my own head again, and pointing upward, I climbed the ladder.

"All right, Mercer," I shouted. "Start at once, before she grows restless!"

"I've already started!" he called back, and I hurriedly donned my own instrument.

Bearing in mind what Mercer had said, I descended the ladder but a few rungs, so that my head remained out of water, and smiled down at the girl, touching the instrument on my head, and then pointing to hers.

I could sense Mercer's thoughts now. He was picturing himself walking long the shore, with the stormy ocean in the background. Ahead of him I saw the white body lying face downward in the pool. I saw him run up to the pool and lift the slim, pale figure in his arms.

LET me make it clear, at this point, that when I say that I saw these things, I mean only that mental images of them penetrated my consciousness. I visualized them just as I could close my eyes and visualize, for example, the fireplace in the living room of my own home.

I looked down at the girl. She was frowning, and her eyes were very wide. Her head was a little on one side, in the attitude of one who listens intently.

Slowly and carefully Mercer thought out the whole story of his experiences with the girl until she had plunged into the pool. Then I saw again the beach, with the girl's figure in the pool. The picture grew hazy; I realized Mercer was trying to picture the bottom of the sea. Then he pictured again the girl lying in the pool, and once again the sea. I was aware of the soft little tick in the center of my brain that announced that the switch had been moved to another contact point.

I glanced down at her. She was staring up at me with her great, curious eyes, and I sensed, through the medium of the instrument I wore, that she was thinking of me. I saw my own features, idealized, glowing with a strange beauty that was certainly none of my own. I realized that I saw myself, in short, as she saw me. I smiled back at her, and shook my head.

A STRANGE, dim whirl of pictures swept through my consciousness. I was on the bottom of the ocean. Shadowy shapes swept by silently, and from above, a dim bluish light filtered down on a scene such as mortal eyes have never seen.

All around were strange structures of jagged coral, roughly circular as to base, and rounded on top, resembling very much the igloos of the Eskimos. The structures varied greatly in size, and seemed to be arranged in some sort of regular order, like houses along a narrow street. Around many of them grew clusters of strange and colorful seaweeds that waved their banners gently, as though some imperceptible current dallied with them in passing.

Here and there figures moved; slim white figures that strolled along the narrow street, or at times shot overhead like veritable torpedoes.

There were both men and women moving there. The men were broader of shoulder, and their hair, which they wore to their knees, was somewhat darker in color than that of the women. Both sexes were slim, and there was a

remarkable uniformity of size and appearance.

None of the strange beings wore garments of any kind, nor were they necessary. The clinging tresses were cinctured at the waist with a sort of cord of twisted orange-colored material, and some of the younger women wore bands of the same material around their brows.

NEAREST of all the figures was the girl who was visualizing all this for us. She was walking slowly away from the cluster of coral structures. Once or twice she paused, and seemed to hold conversation with others of the strange people, but each time she moved on.

The coral structures grew smaller and poorer. Finally the girl trod alone on the floor of the ocean, between great growths of kelp and seaweeds, with dim, looming masses of faintly tinted coral everywhere. Once she passed close to a tilted, ragged hulk of some ancient vessel, its naked ribs packed with drifted sand.

Sauntering dreamily, she moved away from the ancient derelict. Suddenly a dim shadow swept across the sand at her feet, and she arrowed from the spot like a white, slim meteor. But behind her darted a black and swifter shadow—a shark!

Like a flash she turned and faced the monster. Something she had drawn from her girdle shone palely in her hand. It was a knife of whetted stone or bone.

Darting swiftly downward her feet spurned the yellow sand, and she shot at her enemy with amazing speed. The long blade swept in an arc, ripped the pale belly of the monster just as he turned to dart away.

A GREAT cloud of blood dyed the water. The white figure of the girl shot onward through the scarlet flood.

Blinded, she did not see that the jutting ribs of the ancient ship were in her path. I seemed to see her crash, head on, into one of the massive timbers, and I cried out involuntarily, and glanced down at the girl in the water at my feet.

Her eyes were glowing. She knew that I had understood.

Hazily, then, I seemed to visualize her body floating limply in the water. It was all very vague and indistinct, and I understood that this was not what she had seen, but what she thought had happened. The impressions grew wilder, swirled, grew gray and indistinct. Then I had a view of Mercer's face, so terribly distorted it was barely recognizable. Then a kaleidoscopic maze of inchoate scenes, shot through with flashes of vivid, agonizing colors. The girl was thinking of her suffering, taken out of her native element. In trying to save her, Mercer had almost killed her. That, no doubt, was why she hated him.

My own face appeared next, almost godlike in its kindliness and its imagined beauty, and I noticed now that she was thinking of me with my yellow hair grown long, my nostrils elongated like her own—adjusted to her own ideas of what a man should be.

I FLUNG the instrument from my head and dropped to the bottom of the pool. I gripped both her shoulders, gently, to express my thanks and friendship.

My heart was pounding. There was a strange fascination about this girl from the depths of the sea, a subtle appeal that was answered from some deep subterranean cavern of my being. I forgot, for the moment, who and what I was. I remembered only that a note had been sounded that awoke an echo of a long-forgotten instinct.

I think I kissed her. I know her arms were about me, and that I pressed her close, so that our faces almost met. Her great, weirdly blue eyes seemed to bore into my brain. I could feel them throbbing there. . . .

I forgot time and space. I saw only

that pale, smiling face and those great dark eyes. Then, strangling, I tore myself from her embrace and shot to the surface.

Coughing, I cleared my lungs of the water I had inhaled. I was weak and shaking when I finished, but my head was clear. The grip of the strange fantasy that had gripped me was shaken off.

Mercer was bending over me, speaking softly.

"I was watching, old man," he said gently. "I can imagine what happened. A momentary, psychic fusing of an ancient, long since broken link. You, together with all mankind, came up out of the sea. But there is no retracing the way."

I NODDED, my head bowed on my streaming chest.

"Sorry, Mercer," I muttered. "Something got into me. Those big eyes of hers seemed to tug at threads of memory . . buried. I can't describe it. . ."

He slapped me on my naked shoulder, a blow that stung, as he had intended it to. It helped jerk me back to the normal.

"You've got your feet on the ground again, Taylor," he commented soothingly. "I think there's no danger of you losing your grip on terra firma again. Shall we carry on?"

"There's more you'd like to learn? That you think she can give us?" I asked hesitantly.

"I believe," replied Mercer, "that she can give us the history of her people, if we can only make her understand what we wish. God! If we only could!" The name of the Deity was a prayer as Mercer uttered it.

"We can try, old-timer," I said, a bit shakenly.

Mercer hurried back to the other side of the pool, and I adjusted my head-set again, smiling down at the girl. If only Mercer could make her understand, and if only she knew what we wanted to learn!

I was conscious of the little click that told me the switch had been moved, Mercer was ready to get his message to her.

Fixing my eyes on the girl pleadingly, I settled myself by the edge of the pool to await the second and more momentous part of our experiment.

THE vision was vague, for Mercer was picturing his thoughts with difficulty. But I seemed to see again the floor of the ocean, with the vague light filtering down from above, and soft, monstrous growths waving their branches lazily in the flood.

From the left came a band of men and women, looking around as though in search of some particular spot. They stopped, and one of the older men pointed, the others gathering around him as though in council.

Then the band set to work. Coral growth were dragged to the spot. The foundation for one of the semi-circular houses was laid. The scene swirled and cleared again. The house was completed. Several other houses were in process of building.

Slowly and deliberately, the scene moved. The houses were left behind. Before my consciousness now was only a vague and shadowy expanse of ocean floor, and in the sand dim imprints that marked where the strange people had trod, the vague footprints disappearing in the gloom in the direction from which the little weary band had come. To me, at least, it was quite clear that Mercer was asking whence they came. Would it be as clear to the girl? The switch clicked, and for a moment I was sure Mercer had not been able to make his question clear to her.

THE scene was the interior of one of the coral houses. There were persons there, seated on stone or coral chairs, padded with marine growths. One of the occupants of the room was a very old man; his face was wrinkled, and his hair was silvery. With him were a man and a woman, and a little

girl. Somehow I seemed to recognize the child as the girl in the pool.

The three of them were watching the old man. While his lips did not move, I could see his throat muscles twitching as the girl's had done when she made the murmuring sound I had guessed was her form of speech.

The scene faded. For perhaps thirty seconds I was aware of nothing more than a dim gray mist that seemed to swirl in stately circles. Then, gradually, it cleared somewhat, I sensed the fact that what I saw now was what the old man was telling, and that the majestic, swirling mist was the turning back of time.

Here was no ocean bottom, but land, rich tropical jungle. Strange exotic trees and dense growths of rank undergrowth choked the earth. The trees were oddly like undersea growths, which puzzled me for an instant. Then I recalled that the girl could interpret the old man's words only in terms of that which she had seen and understood. This was the way she visualized the scene.

THERE was a gray haze of mist everywhere. The leaves were glistening with condensed moisture; swift drops fell incessantly to the soaking ground below.

Into the scene roamed a pitiful band of people. Men with massive frames, sunken in with starvation, women tottering with weakness. The men carried great clubs, some tipped with rudely shaped stone heads, and both men and women were clothed only in short kittles of skin.

They searched ceaselessly for something, and I guessed that something was food. Now and then one or the other of the little band tore up a root and bit at it, and those that did so soon doubled into a twitching knot of suffering and dropped behind.

At last they came to the edge of the sea. A few yards away the water was lost in the dense steaming miasma that hemmed them in on all sides. With glad expressions on their faces, the party ran down to the edge of the water and gathered up great masses of clams and crabs. At first they ate the food raw, tearing the flesh from the shells. Then they made what I understood was a fire, although the girl was able to visualize it only as a bright red spot that flickered.

The scene faded, and there was only the slowly swirling mist that I understood indicated the passing of centuries. Then the scene cleared again.

I SAW that same shore line, but the people had vanished. There was only the thick, steamy mist, the tropic jungle crowding down to the shore, and the waves rolling in monotonously from the waste of gray ocean beyond the curtain of fog.

Suddenly, from out of the sea, appeared a series of human heads, and then a band of men and women that waded ashore and seated themselves upon the beach, gazing restlessly out across the sea.

This was not the same band I had seen at first. These were a slimmer race, and whereas the first band had been exceedingly swarthy, these were very fair.

They did not stay long on shore, for they were restless and ill at ease. It seemed to me they came there only from force of habit, as though they obeyed some inner urge they did not understand. In a few seconds they rose and ran into the water, plunged into it as though they welcomed its embrace, and disappeared. Then again the vision was swallowed up by the swirling mists of time.

WHEN the scene cleared again, it showed the bottom of the sea. A group of perhaps a hundred pale creatures moved along the dim floor of the ocean. Ahead I could see the dim outlines of one of their strange cities. The band approached, seemed to talk with those there, and moved on.

I saw them capture and kill fish for

food, saw them carve the thick, spongy hearts from certain giant growths and eat them. I saw a pair of killer sharks swoop down on the band, and the quick, deadly accuracy with which both men and women met the attack. One man, older than the rest, was injured before the sharks were vanquished, and when their efforts to staunch his wounds proved unavailing, they left him there and moved on. And as they left I saw a dim, crawling shape move closer, throw out a long, whip-like tentacle, and wrap the body in a hungry embrace.

They came to and passed other communities of beings like themselves, and a city of their own, in much the way that Mercer had visualized it.

Fading, the scene changed to the interior of the coral house again. The old man finished his story, and moved off into a cubicle in the rear of the place. Dimly, I could see there a low couch, piled high with soft marine growths. Then the scene shifted once more.

A man and a woman hurried up and down the narrow streets of the strange city the girl had pictured when she showed us how she had met with the shark, and struck her head, so that for a long period she lost consciousness and was washed ashore.

OTHERS, after a time, joined them in their search, which spread out to the floor of the ocean, away from the dwellings. One party came to the gaunt skeleton of the ancient wreck, and found the scattered, fresh-picked bones of the shark the girl had killed. The man and the woman came up, and I looked closely into their faces. The woman's features were torn with grief; the man's lips were set tight with suffering. Here, it was easy to guess, were the mother and the father of the girl.

A milling mass of white forms shot through the water in every direction, searching. It seemed that they were about to give up the search when suddenly, from out of the watery gloom, there shot a slim white figure—the girl!

Straight to the mother and father she came, gripping the shoulder of each with frantic joy. They returned the caress, the crowd gathered around them, listening to her story as they moved slowly, happily, towards the distant city.

Instead of a picture, I was conscious then of a sound, like a single pleading word repeated softly, as though someone said "Please! Please! Please!" over and over again. The sound was not at all like the English word. It was a soft, musical beat, like the distant stroke of a mellow gong, but it had all the pleading quality of the word it seemed to bring to mind.

I looked down into the pool. The girl had mounted the ladder until her face was just below the surface of the water. Her eyes met mine and I knew that I had not misunderstood.

I threw off the instrument on my head, and dropped down beside her. With both hands I grasped her shoulders, and, smiling, I nodded my head vigorously.

She understood, I know she did. I read it in her face. When I climbed the ladder again, she looked after me, smiling confidently.

Although I had not spoken to her, she had read and accepted the promise.

MERCER stared at me silently, grimly, as I told him what I wished. Whatever eloquence I may have, I used on him, and I saw his cold, scientific mind waver before the warmth of my appeal.

"We have no right to keep her from her people," I concluded. "You saw her mother and father, saw their suffering, and the joy her return would bring. You will, Mercer—you will return her to the sea?"

For a long time, Mercer did not reply. Then he lifted his dark eyes to mine, and smiled, rather wearily.

"It is the only thing we can do, Taylor," he said quietly. "She is not a scientific specimen; she is, in her

way, as human as you or I. She would probably die, away from her own kind, living under conditions foreign to her. And you promised her, Taylor, whether you spoke your promise or not." His smile deepened a bit. "We cannot let her receive too bad an opinion of her cousins who live above the surface of the sea!"

AND so, just as the dawn was breaking, we took her to the shore. I carried her, unresisting, trustful, in my arms, while Mercer bore a huge basin of water, in which her head was submerged, so that she might not suffer.

Still in our bathing suits we waded out into the ocean, until the waves splashed against our faces. Then I lowered her into the sea. Crouching there, so that the water was just above the tawny glory of her hair, she gazed up at us. Two slim white hands reached towards us, and with one accord, Mercer and I bent towards her. She gripped both our shoulders with a gentle pressure, smiling at us.

Then she did a strange thing. She pointed, under the water, out towards the depths, and with a broad, sweeping motion of her arm, indicated the shore, as though to say that she intended to return. With a last swift, smiling glance up into my face, she turned. There was a flash of white through the water. She was gone. . . .

Silently, through the silence and beauty of the dawn, we made our way back to the house.

AS we passed through the laboratory, Mercer glanced out at the empty pool.

"Man came up from the sea," he said slowly, "and some men went back to it. They were forced back to the teeming source from whence they came, for lack of food. You saw that, Taylor—saw her forebears become amphibians, like the now extinct Dipneusta and Ganoideii, or the still existing Neoceratodus, Polypterus and Amia. Then their lungs became, in effect, gills, and they lost their power of breathing atmospheric air, and could use only air dissolved in water.

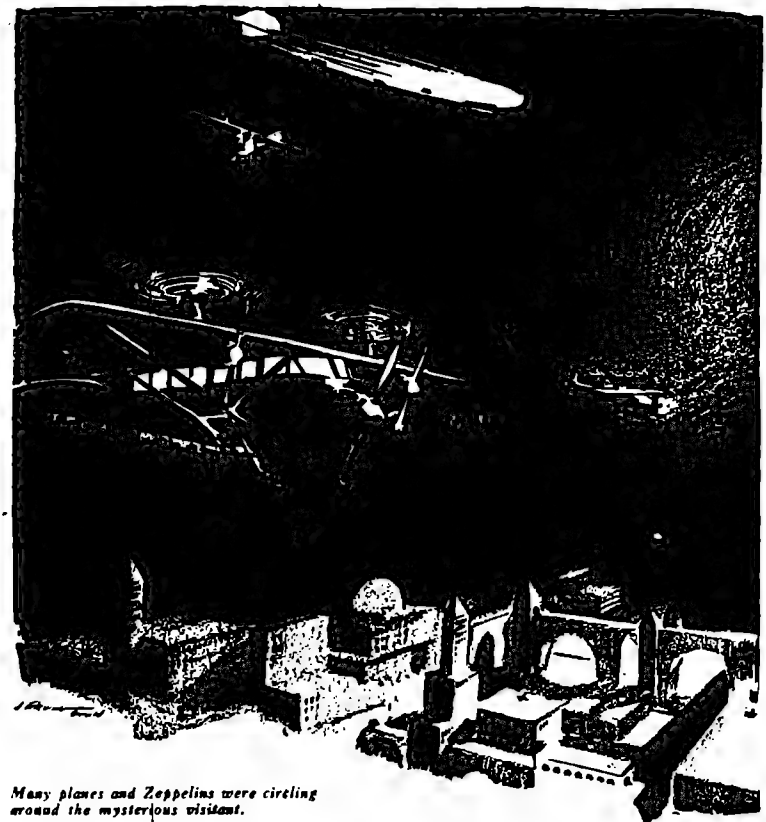
"A whole people there beneath the waves that land-man never dreamed of—except, perhaps, the sailors of olden days, with their tales of mermaids, which we are accustomed to laugh at in our wisdom!"

"But why were no bodies ever washed ashore?" I asked. "I would think—"

"You saw why," interrupted Mercer grimly. "The ocean teems with hungry life. Death is the signal for a feast. It was little more than a miracle that her body came ashore, a miracle due perhaps to the storm which sent the hungry monsters to the greater depths. And even had a body come ashore it would have been buried as that of some unknown, unfortunate human. The differences between these people and ourselves would not be noticeable to a casual observer.

"No, Taylor, we have been party to what was close to a miracle. And we are the only witnesses to it, you and Carson and myself. And"—he sighed deeply—"it is over."

I did not reply. I was thinking of the girl's odd gesture, at parting, and I wondered if it were indeed a finished chapter.



Many planes and Zeppelins were circling around the mysterious visitant.

Vandals of the Stars

By A. T. Locke

IT came suddenly, without warning, and it brought consternation to the people of the world.

A filament of flame darted down the dark skies one moonless night and those who saw it believed, at first, that it was a meteor. Instead of streaking away into oblivion, however, it became larger and larger, until it seemed as though some vagrant, blazing star was about to plunge into the earth and annihilate the planet and every vestige of life upon it. But then it drew slowly to a stop high up in the at-

A livid flame flares across Space—and over Manhattan hovers Tenxical, vassal of Malfero, Lord of the Universe, who comes with ten thousand warriors to ravage and subjugate one more planet for his master.

mosphere, where it remained motionless, glowing white and incandescent against the Stygian background of the overcast skies.

In shape it resembled a Zeppelin, but its dimensions very apparently exceeded by far those of any flying craft that ever had been fabricated by the hand of man.

As it hung poised high up in the air it gradually lost its dazzling glow and became scarlet instead of white. Then, as it continued to cool, the color swiftly drained from it and, in a few minutes, it shone only with the dull and ugly crimson of an expiring ember. In a half-hour after it first had appeared its effulgence had vanished completely and it was barely visible to the millions who were staring up toward it from the earth.

It seemed to be suspended directly above Manhattan, and the inhabitants of New York were thrown into a feverish excitement by the strange and unprecedented phenomenon.

FOR it scarcely had come to a stop, and certainly it had not been poised aloft for more than a few minutes, when most of those who had not actually witnessed its sensational appearance were apprised of the inexplicable occurrence by the radiovision,

which were scattered throughout the vast metropolis. In theaters and restaurants and other gathering places, as well as in millions of homes, a voice from the Worldwide Broadcasting Tower announced the weird visitant. And its image, as it glowed in the night, was everywhere transmitted to the public.

Only a short time after it first had been observed people were thronging roof-tops, terraces, and streets, and gazing with awe and wonder at the great luminous object that was floating high above them.

There were those who thought that the world was coming to an end, and they either were dumb with fright or strident with hysteria. People with more judgment, and a smattering of scientific knowledge, dismissed the thing as some harmless meteorological manifestation that, while interesting, was not necessarily dangerous. And there were many, inclined to incredulity and skepticism, who believed that they were witnessing a hoax or an advertising scheme of some new sort.

But as the moments went by the world commenced to become stirred and alarmed by the reports which came over the radiovisors.

For powerful planes and metal-shelled Zeppelins had climbed swiftly aloft to investigate the incomprehensible Thing that was poised high above Manhattan, and almost unbelievable reports were being sent earthward.

DIRK VANDERPOOL had been sitting alone on the broad terrace of his apartment that occupied the upper stories of the great Gotham Gardens Building when he saw that streak of fire slip down against the darkness of the night.

For a moment he, too, had believed that he was watching a meteor, but, when he saw it come to a slow stop and hang stationary in the heavens, he rose to his feet with an exclamation of surprise.

For a while he gazed upward with an expression of astonishment on his face and then he turned as he heard someone walking softly in his direction. It was Barstowe, his valet, and the eyes of the man were alive with fear.

"What is that thing, Mr. Vanderpool?" he asked in a voice that trembled with alarm. Barstowe was a man of middle age, diminutive in size, and he had the appearance of being nearly petrified with terror. "They are saying over the televisor that—"

"What are they saying about it?" asked Dirk somewhat impatiently.

"That no one can explain what it is," continued Barstowe. "It must be something terrible, Mr. Vanderpool."

"Wheel out the luciscope," ordered Dirk.

BARSTOWE disappeared into the apartment and returned with a cabinet that was mounted on small, rubber-tired wheels. The top of it was formed of a metallic frame in which a heavy, circular, concave glass was fitted. The frame was hinged in front so that it could be raised from the rear, and adjusted to any angle necessary to catch the light rays from any distant object. Within the cabinet the rays passed through an electrical device that amplified them millions of times, thus giving a clear, telescopic vision of the object on which the luciscope was focused.

This instrument, years before, had supplanted entirely the old fashioned telescopes which not only had been immense and unwieldly but which also had a very limited range of vision.

Dirk adjusted the light-converger so that it caught the rays that were being emanated by the weird and shimmering mass that was suspended almost directly above the lofty terrace on which he was standing.

Then he switched on the current and glanced into the eye-piece of the apparatus. For several moments he remained silent, studying the image that was etched so vividly on the ground-glass within the luciscope.

"It is a queer thing, there is no doubt about that," he confessed when finally he raised his head. "It resembles a gigantic Zeppelin in shape but it does not seem to have any undercarriage or, as far as I can see, any indication of propellers or portholes. I would say, though, Barstowe, that it might be a ship from some other planet if it wasn't for the fact that it seems to be in an almost molten state."

DIRK again looked into the luciscope and then he made a few adjustments with a thumb-screw that projected from the side of the apparatus.

"It is up about forty thousand feet," he told Barstowe, "and it must be more than a half-mile in length. Probably," he added, "it is a planetary fragment of some odd composition that is less responsive to gravitation than the materials with which we are familiar. You will find, Barstowe, that there is nothing about it that science will not be able to explain. That will be all now," he concluded.

Barstowe walked over the terrace and disappeared into the apartment. Dirk, left alone, wheeled the luciscope over by the chair in which he had been sitting and near which a radiovisor was standing.

He switched on the latter and listened to the low but very distinct voice of the news-dispatcher.

"—and planes and Zeppelins now are starting up to investigate the strange phenomenon—"

Again Dirk placed an eye to the lens of the luciscope and once more the Thing leaped into his vision. The powerful machine brought it so close to him that he could see the heat waves quiver up from it.

The light that it radiated illuminated the night for thousands of feet and Dirk could see, by means of that crimson glare, that many planes and Zeppelins were circling around the mysterious visitant. None of them, however, approached the alien freak, the heat apparently being too intense to permit close inspection.

DIRK himself was tempted for a moment to jump into a plane and go up and take a look at the fiery mass.

But, after a moment's consideration, he decided that it would be far more interesting and comfortable to remain right where he was and listen to the reports which were being sent down from above.

"—thus far there seems to be no cause for alarm, and people are advised to remain calm—careful observations of the luminous monster are being made and further reports concerning it will be broadcast—"

Dirk Vanderpool rose to his feet, walked to the coping of the terrace and peered into the magnascope that was set into the wall.

He saw that the street, far below him, was jammed with struggling people and the device through which he was looking brought their faces before him in strong relief. Dirk was deeply interested and, at the same time, gravely concerned as he studied the upturned countenances in the mob.

Fear, despair, reckless abandon, mirth, doubt, religious ecstacy and all the other nuances in the gamut of human emotions and passions were reflected in those distorted visages which were gazing skyward.

THE silvery humming of a bell diverted his attention from the scene of congestion below him and, turning away, he walked across the terrace and into the great living-room of his luxurious abode.

Stepping to the televisor, he turned a tiny switch, and the face of a girl appeared in the glass panel that was framed above the sound-box. He smiled as he lifted the receiver and placed it to his ear.

"What is the matter, Inga?" he asked. "You look as if you were expecting — well, almost anything disastrous."

"Oh, Dirk, what is that thing?" the girl asked. "I really am frightened!"

He could see by the expression in her blue eyes that she, too, was becoming a victim of the hysteria that was taking possession of many people.

"I wouldn't be alarmed, Inga," he replied reassuringly. "I don't know what it is, and no one else seems to be able to explain it."

"But it is frightful and uncanny, Dirk," the girl insisted, "and I am sure that something terrible is going to happen. I wish," she pleaded, "that you would come over and stay with me for a little while. I am all alone and—"

"All right, Inga," he told her. "I will be with you in a few minutes."

He hung up the receiver of the televisor and clicked off the switch. The image of the golden-haired girl to whom he had been speaking slowly faded from the glass.

ATTIRING himself for a short sixty-mile hop down Long Island, Dirk passed out to the landing stage and, stepping into the cabin of his plane, he threw in the helicopter lever. The machine rose straight into the air for a couple of hundred feet and then Dirk headed it westward to where the nearest ascension beam sent its red light towering toward the stars. It marked a vertical air-lane that led upward to the horizontal lanes of flight.

Northbound ships flew between two and four thousand feet; southbound planes between five and seven thousand feet; those eastbound confined themselves to the level between nine and eleven thousand feet, while the westbound flyers monopolized the air between twelve and fourteen thousand feet.

All planes flying parallel to the earth were careful to avoid those red beacons which marked ascension routes, and the shafts of green light down which descending planes dropped to the earth or into lower levels of travel.

When Dirk's altimeter indicated seventy-five hundred feet he turned the nose of his ship eastward and adjusted his rheostat until his motors, fed by wireless current, were revolving at top speed.

The great canyons of Manhattan, linked by arches and highways which joined and passed through various levels of the stupendous structures of steelite and quartzite, passed swiftly beneath him; and, after passing for a few minutes over the deserted surface of Long Island, he completed his sixty-mile flight and brought his ship to a rest on a landing stage that was far up on the side of a vast pile that rose up close to the shore of the Sound.

AS soon as he stepped from the door of the cabin he was joined by a girl who, apparently, had been lingering there, awaiting his arrival.

She was perhaps twenty years old, and she had the golden hair, the light complexion, and the blue eyes which still were characteristic of the women of northern Europe.

The slender lines of her exquisite figure and the supple grace which she displayed when she moved toward Dirk were evidence, however, of the Latin blood which was in her veins.

For Inga Fragoni, the daughter and heiress of Orlando Fragoni, seemed to be a culmination of all of the desirable qualities of the women of the south and those of the north.

The terrace on which Dirk had landed was illuminated by lights which simulated sunshine, and their soft bright glow revealed the violet hue of her eyes and the shimmering gloss of her silken hair. She wore a sleeveless, light blue tunic which was gathered around her waist with a bejeweled girdle.

On her tiny feet she wore scandals which were spun of webby filaments of gold and platinum.

"Dirk, I am so glad that you are here!" she exclaimed. "I felt so much alone when I called you up. Dad is

locked in the observatory with Professor Nachbaren and three or four other men and the servants—well, they all are so terrified that it simply alarms me to have them around."

"But that is Stanton's plane there, isn't it?" asked Dirk, indicating a powerful looking machine that stood on the terrace.

"YES, Dirk," the girl replied. "He arrived here three or four minutes before you did. I thought, at first, that it was you coming. And Dirk," she continued, with a note of excitement in her voice, "he flew up to look at that thing, and I know that he is as frightened about it as I am."

Dirk grunted, but he gave no expression of the dislike and distrust that Stanton aroused in him. The latter, he knew, was very much inclined to look with favor on Inga, and his presumption annoyed Dirk because, while he and the girl had not declared their intention of living together, they were very much in love with each other.

"You will want to hear him tell about it, I know, Dirk," the girl said. "I left Stanton up on the garden terrace when I saw you coming down. Come, we will go and join him."

Dirk and Inga strolled slowly along paths which were lined with exotic shrubbery and plants. Here and there a fountain tossed its glittering spray high into the air while birds, invisible in the feathery foliage, warbled and thrilled entrancingly. Soft music, transmitted from the auditoriums below, blended so harmoniously with the atmosphere of the terraces that it seemed to mingle with and be a part of the drifting, subtle scents of the abundant flowers which bloomed on every side.

For these upper terraces of Fragoni's palace were enclosed, during inclement weather, with great glass plates which, at the touch of a button, automatically appeared or disappeared.

Winding their way easily upward, Dirk and Inga came finally to a secluded terrace which overlooked the Sound. Here they saw Stanton, who was unaware of their approach, looking skyward at the dim and sinister shape which was outlined against the sky. Stanton's brow was contracted and his expression was filled with apprehension. He started suddenly when he became conscious of the presence of Dirk and the lovely daughter of Fragoni.

He rose to his feet, a short man in his forties, stocky in build and somewhat swarthy in complexion. He contrasted very unfavorably with Dirk, who was tall and well-built and who had abundant blond hair and steady steel-blue eyes.

"What do you make of that thing, Vanderpool?" he asked, almost ignoring the presence of Inga.

"I don't know enough about it yet to be able to express an opinion," Dirk replied. "We will find out about it soon enough," he added, "so why worry about it, in the meantime?"

"It is well enough to affect such an attitude," said Stanton, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice, "but let me tell you, Vanderpool, that there is good reason to worry about it."

DIRK frowned at the statement as he saw a shadow pass over the fair face of Inga.

"That thing up there," continued Stanton, with conviction in his voice, "is not a natural phenomenon. I flew fairly close to it in my plane and I knew what I am speaking about. That thing is some sort of a monster, Vanderpool, that is made of metal or of some composition that is an unearthly equivalent of metal. It is a diabolical creation of some sort that has come from out of the fathomless depths of the universe." He shuddered at the fantasy that his feverish imagination was creating. "It is metal, I tell you," he continued, "but it is metal that is endowed with some sort of intelligence. I was up there," he breathed swiftly, "and I saw it hanging there in

the sky, quivering with heat and life."

"You are nervous, Stanton," said Vanderpool coolly. "Get a grip on yourself, man, and look at the thing reasonably. If that thing has intelligence," he added, "we will find some way to slay it."

"Slay it!" exclaimed Stanton. "How can you expect to slay a mad creation that can leap through space, from world to world, like a wasp goes darting from flower to flower? How can you kill a thing which not only defies absolute zero but also the immeasurable heat which its friction with the atmosphere generated when it plunged toward the earth? How can you kill a thing that seems to have brains and nerves and bones and flesh of some strange substance that is harder and tougher than any earthly compound we have discovered?"

HE stopped speaking for a moment. They listened to the voice that was broadcasting from the Worldwide Tower.

"—our planes have approached to within a few thousand feet of it and are playing their searchlights over the surface of the leviathan. It is not a meteorite of any kind that scientists have heretofore examined—its surface is smooth and unpitted and shows no apparent effect of the tremendous heat to which it was subjected during its drop through the atmosphere. It seems to be immune to gravity—its weight must be tremendous, and it is fully three-quarters of a mile long and between seven and eight hundred feet in diameter at its widest part, but it lies motionless—motionless—at about forty thousand feet."

"It doesn't appear now as if it would prove very dangerous," remarked Dirk.

"—and people are warned again to maintain their composure and to go to their homes and remain there for their own protection and the protection of others. Riots and serious disturbances are reported from cities in all parts of the world—mobs are swarming the streets of Manhattan and the other boroughs of New York, and the police are finding it difficult to restrain the frenzied populations in other centers. ."

THERE was a pause, then, of some moments, and then the voice of the broadcaster, vibrant with excitement, was heard again.

"—a plane has made a landing on the surface of the monstrosity, which, it seems, has not only lost its heat but is becoming decidedly cold—"

A servant appeared from among the shrubbery and paused before Dirk.

"There is a call for you, Mr. Vanderpool," he said respectfully.

Dirk excused himself and, entering the sumptuous apartment that opened from the terrace, went to the televisor. He saw the face of Sears, the chief secretary of Fragoni, in the glass panel.

"There will be a meeting of the council at nine o'clock in the morning, Mr. Vanderpool," came the voice over the wire.

"Thank you, Sears," replied Dirk. "It happens that Stanton is here at the present time. Shall I notify him of the conclave?"

"If you will, please," Sears responded. "By the way, Mr. Vanderpool, is there anything wrong at your apartment? I tried to call you there before I located you here and I failed to get any response."

"I guess that all of my servants have run out from under cover because of their fear of that thing in the sky," Dirk responded. "Do you know anything about it, Sears?" he asked.

"It will be discussed at the meeting to-morrow morning," replied Sears shortly. "Good night, Mr. Vanderpool."

DIRK, upon returning to the terrace, saw that both Stanton and Inga were silently and fearfully looking up into the night.

"A meeting of the council at nine o'clock in the morning, Stanton," Dirk said abruptly. "I told Sears I would notify you."

"I thought that we would be called together very soon," said Stanton. "It's concerning that damn thing up there."

"Perhaps," agreed Dirk carelessly. "Well," he added, "I believe that I will hop home and get some sleep."

"Sleep!" exclaimed Stanton. "Sleep? On a night like this?"

"Oh, Dirk," pleaded Inga, "stay here with me, won't you? I am not going to bed because I just know that I wouldn't be able to close my eyes."

"Let him go, Inga, if he wants to sleep," urged Stanton. "I will stay here and keep watch with you."

"—and if order is not restored in the streets of Manhattan within the course of a short time, the authorities will resort to morphite gas to quell the turbulence and rioting—"

"The streets must be frightfully congested," said Inga. "It is the first occasion in a long time that the police have had to threaten the use of morphite."

"—we do not want to alarm people unnecessarily but we have to report," came the hurried voice of the broadcaster, "that the monstrous mass that has been hanging above the city just made a sudden drop of five thousand feet and again came to a stop. It is now a little more than six miles over Manhattan and—again it has dropped. This time it fell like a plummet for twelve thousand feet. It is now about twenty thousand feet, some four miles, above Manhattan and—"

A CRY of alarm came from the lips of Inga as she gazed upward and saw that gigantic, ominous-appearing object loom dim and vast in the darkness above them.

She went to Dirk and threw her arms around him, as if she were clinging to him for protection.

"Don't leave me, Dirk," she whispered. "I can just feel that something terrible is going to happen, and I want you with me!"

"I'll stay with you, of course," whispered Dirk. Something of that feeling of dread and apprehension which so fully possessed his two companions entered into his mind. "Don't tremble so, Inga," he pleaded. "It is a strange thing, but we will know more about it in the morning. Be calm until then, my dear, if you can."

He looked over the shoulder of the girl, whose face was buried against his breast, and he saw a hundred great red and green shafts of light shooting up into the air. Fleeting shadows seemed to pass swiftly up and down them, and he knew that thousands of planes were abroad, some of them seeking the heights and others dropping down.

The great towers of Long Island were all aglow, and it was apparent that few people were sleeping that night. The scarlet sky over Manhattan indicated that the center of the metropolis, too, was alive to the menace of the weird visitant that now was so plainly visible.

All night long they remained on the terrace, Dirk and Igna seated close together and Stanton, at a distance, brooding alone over the disaster which he felt was impending.

The illuminated dial of the great clock that was a part of the beacon tower on the Metropole Landing Field told off the slow passing of the hours.

All night long they listened to the reports that came through the radiovisor and watched that immobile, threatening monster of metal.

But it remained static during the rest of the night. And, with the coming of a gray and sunless dawn, it still hung there, motionless, silent and sinister.

THE next morning the President of the United States of the World, from the capitol at The Hague, issued a proclamation of martial law, to become effective at once in all part of the world.

The edict forbade people to leave their homes, and it was vigorously executed, wherever the police themselves were not in a state of demoralization.

At about the same time a special meeting of the Supreme Congress was called, the body to remain in session until some solution of the mystery had been arrived at.

At the same time that martial law was declared, however, and the special assemblage of lawmakers convened, a statement was issued in which an attempt was made to eliminate from the minds of the people the idea that the undefinable object above the metropolis was at all dangerous.

It was, indeed, suggested that it very probably was some sort of new device which had been constructed on the earth and which was being introduced to the people of the world in a somewhat sensational manner by the person or persons who were responsible for it.

The fears of the populace were, to some extent, allayed by this means, and some degree of order restored.

AT nine o'clock Dirk Vanderpool was shown into the council chamber in the palace of Orlando Fragoni, and he was closely followed by Stanton. Fragoni was already there, and he greeted the two men with a countenance that was serene but that, nevertheless, revealed indications of concern. He was a man past middle age, tall and strikingly handsome in appearance. His eyes were dark and penetrating and his forehead, high and wide, was crowned by an abundance of snow-white hair. His voice, while pleasing to the ear, was vibrant with life and energy, and he spoke with the incisive directness of one accustomed to command.

For Orlando Fragoni, as nearly as any one man might be, was the ruler of the world.

It was in the early part of the twentieth century that wealth had commenced to concentrate into a relatively few hands. This was followed by a period in which vast mergers and consolidations had been effected as a result of the financial power and genius for organization which a few men possessed. A confederation of the countries of the world was brought about by industrial kings who had learned, in one devastating war, that militarism, while it might bring riches to a few, was, in the final analysis, destructive and wasteful.

Mankind the world over, relieved of the menace of war, made more progress in a decade than they had made in any previous century, but all the time the invisible concentration of power and money continued.

And, in 1975, the affairs of the world were controlled by five men, of whom Orlando Fragoni was the most powerful and most important.

HIS grandfather had been a small banker, and out of his obscure transactions the great House of Fragoni had arisen. The money power of the world was now controlled by Orlando Fragoni. Dirk Vanderpool, partly as a result of a vast inheritance and partly through his own ability and untiring industry, dominated the transportation facilities of the world. Planes and Zeppelins, railroad equipment and ships, were built in his plants and operated by the many organizations which he controlled.

Stanton had inherited the agricultural activities of the world and, in addition to this, he was the sovereign of distribution. He owned immense acreages in all of the continents; he not only cultivated every known variety of produce, but also handled the sale of his products through his own great chains of stores. His father had been one of the great geniuses of the preceding generation, but Stanton, while inheriting the commercial empire which he had ruled, had not inherited much of the ability which had gone into the establishment of it.

There were two other members of

that invisible council of Five, the very existence of which was not even suspected by the general populace of the world.

Sigmund Lazarre was the world's mightiest builder, and millions of great structures, which were built of material from his own mines, were under his control. It was Lazarre, too, who owned the theaters and other amusement centers in which millions upon millions of people sought relaxation every day. The creation and application of electrical power made up the domain of Wilhelm Steinholt, who also owned the factories that made the machinery of the world.

Absolute control of all of the necessities and luxuries of life, in fact, were in the hands of the five men, who used their vast power wisely and beneficently.

Ostensibly the peoples of the world ruled themselves by means of a democratic form of government.

In reality their lives were directed by a few men whose power and wealth were entirely unsuspected by any but those who were close to them.

THE council room in which Fragoni had received Dirk and Stanton was lofty and sumptuously appointed.

The rugs which covered the floor were soft to the tread, and the walls and ceiling were adorned with a series of murals which represented the various heavenly constellations.

At the far end of the chamber there was a staircase, and Dirk was among those who knew that it led up to the great observatory in which Fragoni and certain of his scientific associates spent so much of their time at night.

For men had commenced to talk about the conquest of the stars, and it was generally believed that it would not be many years more before a way would be found to traverse the interplanetary spaces.

"We are rather fortunate, my friends," Fragoni said to his two associates, "to have been the witnesses of the event that transpired last night."

"Fortunate!" exclaimed Stanton. "Then you know that the thing is harmless?"

A little smile lit the benign and scholarly countenance of Fragoni as he calmly regarded Stanton.

"We know very little about it," he replied after a brief pause, "and, if our surmises are correct, it may be very far from harmless. It is intensely interesting, nevertheless," he continued, "because that thing, as you term it, unquestionably is directed by intelligence. Without the slightest doubt the people of the earth are about to behold a form of life from some far-away planet. What that form will be," he added, with an almost imperceptible shrug of his shoulders, "it is impossible to forecast."

"But it was so hot," commenced Stanton, "that—"

"True," agreed Fragoni, "but it also is large and it may be that only the outer shell of it was effected by friction with the atmosphere that surrounds the earth. Nachbaren," he continued, "is certain that there is intelligent life within it; and Nachbaren," he added dryly, "is usually right."

WHILE Fragoni had been speaking, two more men had quietly joined them.

"Good morning, Lazarre," Fragoni said, addressing a short, swarthy, man who, very apparently, was of Jewish extraction.

"Good morning," the other replied in a soft and mellifluous voice. "It seems," he continued, with a twinkle in his eyes, "as if some of my pretty buildings may be toppled over soon."

"Maybe," agreed Fragoni. "And maybe," he added more seriously, "much more than your buildings will be toppled over, Lazarre."

"That thing, then, is. . ?" questioned the heavy-set, slow-speaking, blue-eyed Teuton who had come into the room with Lazarre.

"We do not know, Steinholt," admitted Fragoni, "but our knowledge undoubtedly will be increased considerably within the next few hours. And now," he said, "we will consider the problem at hand."

"—the object which has created such unrest is slowly rising. It is now some twenty-five thousand feet above Manhattan. It is—"

The voice from the radiovisor attracted the attention of the five men, and, with one accord, they rushed to the terrace and looked toward Manhattan. They saw the great leviathan high in the air for a moment, and then, suddenly, it seemed to vanish from sight.

"It's gone!" exclaimed Stanton, with a sigh of relief. "It must have been some odd atmospheric freak, that's all."

They searched the skies through the luciscope that was on the terrace, but failed to detect any trace of the monster.

"THAT seems to simplify matters," remarked Fragoni as they again walked back into the great conference room. But here, once more, they heard the voice from the World-wide Tower.

"—we are advised by Chicago that the thing, dull red with heat, is hovering only a couple of thousand feet over the city. Thousands in the streets are being killed by the heat it is radiating —panic reigns, despite a rigorous enforcement of martial law. The strange object just rose suddenly to a high altitude and disappeared—"

"It's another one of those damned things," asserted Stanton. "That couldn't go a thousand miles a minute!"

"It can go faster than that, if I am not mistaken," said Fragoni. And it presently appeared that he was right, for in a couple of minutes the radiovisor transmitted the news that it was over San Francisco, where it remained for only a few seconds. It was not more than a minute later that word came from Shanghai that it had passed slowly over that city. Then again it was poised high over Manhattan, crimson with heat.

"Is there any possible defense against it, Steinholt?" Fragoni asked. The Teuton shook his head with an air of finality.

"None," he said, "as far as I can determine now. We can create and direct artificial lightning that would reduce this building to a mass of powdered stone and fused metal in a fraction of a second. But I am certain that it wouldn't leave as much as a scratch on that monster up there. We might try the Z-Rays on it, but an intelligence that could devise such a craft would undoubtedly have the wisdom to protect it against such an elementary menace as rays. Even the mightiest explosives that we have wouldn't send a tremor through that mighty mass."

"WHY not await developments?" asked Dirk. "We do not even know the nature of the thing we are trying to combat."

"It's solid metal," insisted Stanton tenaciously. "It's a metal body with a metal brain."

"Don't be ridiculous," said Steinholt. "It seems quite apparent that the craft has come from another planet, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, there are intelligent creatures inside it."

"In any event," said Dirk, "it seems impractical to make any plans until we know more about it. I suggest that we empower Fragoni to act for the rest of us in this matter."

"That is very agreeable to me," said Steinholt. "A crisis very possibly may arise in which the quick judgment of one man may be necessary to avert the danger that always is inherent in delay."

"You hold my proxy," Lazarre said to Fragoni, "and I assume that Stanton is agreeable to this procedure."

"—the thing is moving very slowly eastward in the direction of Long Island Sound. It is, at the same time,

losing altitude. Its movements are being carefully watched. As yet we see no cause for immediate alarm—people are advised to remain calm—"

"Yes, I am agreeable," said Stanton nervously and hastily. "If there are things in it with which we can compromise, I would suggest that we do not offend them."

"I am, then, empowered to act for all of you," said Fragoni, ignoring the suggestion of Stanton.

HE rose from his chair and walked out on the terrace. The others followed after him.

Looking westward, they saw the mammoth craft descending slowly in their direction.

Its vast dimensions became more and more apparent as, spellbound, they watched it approach closer and closer to them.

The thing in the sky was now not more than three thousand feet above them and only a few miles to the westward.

The observers on the terrace regarded it for a moment in silence as it drifted forward and downward.

"It's colossal!" Steinhold then exclaimed, lost in scientific admiration of the mammoth craft. "Magnificent! Superb!"

"But it's coming right toward us!" cried Stanton.

"What makes it move, I wonder?" asked Dirk. "And how in the world is it controlled?"

"It surely is not of this world," said Fragoni quietly. "That gigantic thing has come to us from somewhere out of the infinite and terrible depths of space."

ANOTHER minute elapsed while they watched it, speechless with wonder.

"Do you know," Lazarre then said calmly, "I believe that it is going to land in the waters of the Sound. It appears so to me, anyway."

It was nearly opposite them by this time, and not more than a thousand feet above the water. A few planes which, very apparently, were being flown by intrepid and fearless flyers, were hovering close around it.

Then finally it came to rest, as Lazarre had predicted, in the water some two miles off shore, and it was obscured by a great cloud of vapor for several minutes.

"Steam," asserted Steinholt. "That trip around the world, which it made in a few minutes, generated considerable frictional heat in the shell."

"Come," said Fragoni, "we'll fly out and look the thing over."

Around the corner of the building, on the level of the terrace, there was a landing stage which was occupied by a number of planes of various sizes.

Dirk entered the door of a small twenty passenger speedster, and the others filed in after him.

"Ready?" he asked, after he had seated himself at the controls.

"Ready!" replied Fragoni.

The plane rose straight up into the air and then darted gracefully out over the Sound.

DIRK swooped straight down at the leviathan which lay so quietly on the surface of the Sound and then slowly circled around it. No sign of an aperture of any sort could be seen in the craft. Then he dropped the plane lightly on the water, close to the metallic monster, which towered fully four hundred feet above them, despite the fact that more than half of it was submerged.

"It must be hollow," remarked Steinholt, "or it wouldn't be so far out of the water. In fact, it most certainly would sink, if it was solid."

At the touch of a lever which lay under one of Dirk's hands the plane rose straight out of the water, and he maneuvered it directly over the top of the strange enigma. Then he touched a button and the pontoons were drawn up into the undercarriage of the craft.

"Shall I make a landing on it?" he

asked, turning his head and addressing Fragoni.

The latter nodded his head, and Dirk dropped the ship gently onto the smooth surface of the monster, the pneumatic gearing completely absorbing the shock of the landing.

Dirk relinquished the controls and, opening the door of the cabin, he stepped out onto the rough and pitted substance of which the leviathan was compounded. He stood there while the others came out after him.

A large area on the top of the monster was perfectly flat and, within a very few moments, Dirk discovered that it was decidedly warm. He had brought the plane down close to the middle of the length of the strange craft in the belief that there, if anywhere, some indication of an entrance might be found.

THE voice of Steinholt, tense with suppressed excitement, appraised him that his surmise had been correct.

"There is a manhole of some sort," the electrical wizard exclaimed. "And look, it is turning!"

They saw, not far ahead of them, a circular twelve-foot section of the deck slowly revolving, and, even as they watched, it commenced to rise slowly upward as the threads with which it was provided turned gradually around.

Almost involuntarily they retreated a few feet and stood there, spellbound, as they stared at the massive, revolving section of the deck.

It continued to turn until fully ten feet of the mobile cylinder had been exposed. Then the bottom of it appeared. Even then it continued to revolve and rise on a comparatively small shaft which supported it and, at the same time, thrust it upward. Dirk and his companions kept their eyes on the rim of the well which had been exposed, and awaited the appearance of something, they knew not what. When the top of the great cylinder was fully twelve feet above the deck of the craft it slowly ceased to revolve.

Moment succeeded moment as the members of the little group rigidly and almost breathlessly awaited developments.

Then Dirk, with an impatient ejaculation, stepped forward toward the yawning hole and cautiously peered over the edge of it.

He stood there for a moment, as if transfixed, and then, with an exclamation of horror, retreated swiftly to where his friends were standing.

"WHAT is it?" gasped Steinholt. "What did you see when—"

But the words died on his lips for, swarming swiftly over every side of the well, there poured an array of erect, piercing-eyed beings, who had all the characteristics of humans. They were clad in tight-fitting attire of thin and pliant metal which, with the exception of their faces, shielded them from head to foot. On their heads they wore close-fitting helmets, apparently equipped with visors which could be drawn down to cover their unprepossessing features.

Each one of them carried a tube which bore a striking resemblance to a portable electric flashlight.

Swiftly they advanced, in ranks of eight, toward Dirk and his companions who, gripped with amazement, held their positions.

The first line came to a halt not more than four feet from the little group on the deck. The other lines halted, too, and formed a great platoon. Then a shrill whistle sounded and the formation parted in the middle, leaving an open path that led backward to the entrance to the well.

A moment later the watchers saw the regal figure of a man emerge from the orifice and, after a moment's pause, advance slowly in their direction with a stately stride.

He was tall and muscular and blond and his attire, golden in texture, glittered with sparkling gems.

As he approached them he raised his right hand and, inasmuch as his coun-

tenance was calm and benign, his gesture appeared to be one of peace and good-will.

FOLLOWING close behind him there was a younger man who, very apparently, was of the same lineage. His expression, however, was petulant and haughty and it contained more than a suggestion of rapacity and evil.

Behind him there were others of the same fair type, all of them sumptuously and ornately attired.

Fragoni stepped forward, himself a dignified and striking figure, as the leader of the strange adventurers came forth from the lane that had been formed by his immobile guard of warriors.

The two men confronted each other, one whose power and wealth gave him a dominate position on earth, and the other a personage from some domain that was remote in the abyss of space.

Fragoni bowed and spoke a few friendly words of welcome and the stranger, to the utter amazement of the banker and his associates, responded in an English that was rather peculiar in accent but that they could understand without any difficulty.

"From what part of the world do you come," asked the astounded Fragoni, "that you speak our language?"

"We come from no part of this world," replied the stranger. "The empire of my ruler is infinitely far away. But language, my friend, is not a thing of accident. Life grows out of the substance of the universe and language comes out of life. The speech of mankind, in your state of development, varies but little throughout all space and I have heard your English, as you call it, spoken among those who dwell in many, many worlds."

"And your world?" asked Steinholt with avid curiosity. "Tell us of the planet from which you come."

BUT Fragoni, smiling at the eagerness of Steinholt, interposed with a kindly but arresting gesture.

"My name is Fragoni," he said to the stranger, "and I would have you partake of my hospitality and refresh yourself after your long journey. These," he added, "are my friends, Steinholt, Vanderpool and Lazarre."

"I am Teuxical, vassal of his Supreme Highness, Malfero of Lodore," the other replied. "This is my son, Zitlan," he continued, indicating the young man behind him, "and the others are my high captains, Anteucan, Orzitza and Huazibar. More of my officers are below together with ten thousand armed and armored men such as you see before you."

If the last part of the statement was intended as a threat or a warning, the expression on Fragoni's face gave no indication that he was aware of it.

"You carry a large crew, sir," Fragoni replied, "but we gladly will make provisions for all of your men. As for yourself, your son, and your captains, if you will come with me. . . ."

He nodded in the direction of the plane which rested on the great interplanetary vessel and started to walk slowly in the direction of it. The leader of the skymen walked by his side and the other men from Lodore followed close after them.

Dirk, Steinholt and Lazarre brought up the rear, while the soldiers remained motionless in their serried array.

INNUMERABLE planes were circling overhead and hundreds of them had landed on the water in the vicinity. Dirk saw that the wanderers from the stars regarded them curiously as if they never before had seen aircraft of that particular type.

When the cabin door of the plane was thrown open, Teuxical turned to one of his captains.

"Remain here, Anteucan, with the soldiers," he commanded, "and await our return."

Teuxical then entered the plane with his men and Fragoni, Steinholt and Lazarre followed after them. Then Dirk took his seat at the controls.

"These are strange craft you use," he heard Teuxical say. "I have seen them in only one of the multitude of other worlds on which I have set my feet, worlds which all pay tribute to Malfero of Lodore. It is safer and swifter to ride the magnetic currents than it is to ride the unstable currents of the air."

Dirk caught the significance of the reference to tribute and he admired the clever diplomacy of Teuxical while, at the same time, he wondered if the earth and all of those who dwelt upon it were doomed to fall under the sway of some remote and unseen despot.

He also realized that the Lodorians had, in some way, devised a craft that rode the great magnetic streams which flowed through the universe in much the same way that men, in ships, navigated the streams of the earth.

He threw on the helicopter switch and the plane rose swiftly into the air, the myriad other flying craft which were circling nearby keeping at a safe distance from it.

"Land on the grand terrace," Fragoni directed. The flight was short and rapid and it was only a matter of seconds before Dirk brought the plane down on the landing stage which they had left only a scant half-hour before.

He opened the cabin door and stepped out of the plane and the others filed out after him.

FRAGONI led the way along the stage, walking and chatting with Teuxical, and Dirk, following after the others, was the last to turn a corner that brought him a sweeping view of the magnificent terrace that fronted the private apartments of the banker and his daughter.

And, when he did, he saw that Inga was standing there, superbly beautiful, with Stanton a few paces behind her.

Her lovely eyes were alive with awe and wonder and her slender white hands were crossed over her heart.

And Dirk saw, too, that Zitlan, son of Teuxical, had paused and was standing quite still, with his unwavering and insolent eyes fixed on the girl. Resentment, and a touch of apprehension, agitated Dirk when he saw the expression on the face of the young Lodorian.

There was admiration in that disagreeable countenance, but it was blended with arrogance, haughtiness and ill-concealed desire.

Dirk went quickly to Inga, standing between the girl and the one from Lodore who was staring at her so brazenly.

"What does it all mean, Dirk?" she asked in a low voice. "Those strange people, where are they from?"

Stanton had come quickly forward and had joined Inga and Dirk.

"They are from some far-off world, Inga," he explained, "that we know nothing about as yet."

"But what do they want?" she persisted. "What do they intend to do? I saw those horrible creatures through the magnascope when they came swarming out of the inside of that thing on the water and I thought, at first, that they were going to kill you all."

"No, they seem to come in peace," Dirk replied. "Teuxical, their leader, seems to be gracious and kindly."

"WE are all doomed," asserted Stanton, "unless something happens. They can crumble our cities with heat and bury us under the ruins of them."

"Keep your silence!" breathed Dirk, quietly but tensely. "We will find a way to destroy those creatures if it becomes necessary."

"That man who keeps staring at me, who is he?" asked Inga in a voice that betrayed her nervousness.

Dirk turned and saw that Zitlan was still standing where he had paused and that he still was looking with searching eyes in the direction of the girl.

He returned the insolent gaze of the young Lodorian with an impatient and threatening stare and the countenance

of Zitlan at once became stern and menacing. He came striding in the direction of Inga, Dirk and Stanton and paused within a few feet of them, his rapacious eyes still fixed on the girl.

"My lady," he said, "your beauty pleases me. I have walked on many worlds but never before have I seen one as lovely as yourself. Of the spoils of this world, all that I crave possession of is you. When we return to Lodore," he added with an air of finality, "I will take you with me and place you with my other women in the Seraglio of the Stars."

Dirk swiftly stepped close to Zitlan and the latter quickly clasped a tube that hung at his side, a tube of the sort that the soldiers had carried.

"Your words and your manner are insolent," asserted Dirk angrily, "and I warn you now to cease making yourself offensive."

"Dog!" exclaimed Zitlan fiercely, leveling the metal tube, "I'll—"

But the left fist of Dirk cut short his threat as it made a sudden impact with his chin, and the Lodorian went crashing backward into some exotic shrubbery with a look of surprise on his countenance.

Then Dirk heard an odd hissing and crackling sound, and he felt himself becoming dizzy and weak.

Darkness seemed to sweep in upon him; he felt that he was dropping swiftly through space, and then he lost consciousness.

A VAGUE and shadowy figure was standing close by his side and peering down into his face. After a while he realized that it was Steinholt.

"Steinholt!" he gasped. "Why—why am I here—in Fragoni's? I must have had a dream—and yet. . . ."

He furrowed his brow in thought and, gradually, he commenced to remember what had happened.

"It was no dream," said the scientist softly. "Do you remember the trouble that you had with Zitlan?"

"Yes," replied Dirk. "I remember that he was insolent to Inga and that I lost my temper and struck him. But what happened to me? I don't recall that anybody hit me. I did hear sort of a peculiar sound just before I started to pass out, but—"

"Teuxical took a shot at you," said Steinholt, "and you have been unconscious for over thirty-six hours."

"Took a shot at me!" exclaimed Dirk. "What did he shoot me with?"

"That is what we all would like to know," said Steinholt. "He leveled one of those damn tubes at you and pressed a button on it. There was a hissing sound, a flash of light, and you got groggy and went out. He potted Zitlan, too," continued Steinholt, "and he apologized for the trouble that his son was responsible for. Do you know," he added, "I sort of like the old man."

LAZARRE, with a sympathetic smile on his face, entered the room at that moment and overheard the conversation.

"Old man is right," he remarked, with a little note of awe in his voice. "Teuxical admits that he is three thousand years old and that he has at least two thousand more ahead of him. That Lodore must be a queer world," he commented, shaking his grizzly head.

"It is not so queer when you take everything into consideration," said Steinholt. "It seems quite natural when Teuxical explains it. Lodore, it seems, is something like a hundred thousand times as big as this miniature world we live on. It took Lodore infinitely longer to solidify from a gaseous state than it took this world, and its entire evolution has been relatively slower than ours. Therefore, according to Teuxical, the people up there live longer and, incidentally, know infinitely more than we do."

"WHAT time is it now?" asked Dirk, after a moment of thought.

"It is just about twelve o'clock at night," Steinholt informed him.

"Have these Lodorians made any demands yet?" Dirk asked. "Does anybody know what they are going to do or what they want?"

"They are liable to do almost anything," said Lazarre, "and it looks as though they will be able to get anything that they want. Teuxical, as I understand it, just gave you a slight shock with his death-ray device. If he had pulled the trigger all the way you would have become just a little pile of dust that the first breeze would have blown away."

"Our own death-rays are somewhat similar," said Steinholt, "but they are not a hundredth as powerful. And they won't work on the Lodorians, either," he added, "because those metal sheaths that they wear make them immune to all kinds of destructive rays."

"IT appears," remarked Lazarre morosely, "as if this little world of ours is going to be taken for a ride. And it's too bad, considering that it's the only world we've got. There has been no formal presentation of demands yet, but it seems to be sort of understood that the earth is going to become a tributary of Lodore. It is a good thing," he added, "that Teuxical, and not Zitlan, is the boss of that outfit. I don't like the looks of that young fellow. He's only twelve hundred years old and he is sort of hot-blooded, I guess."

"I was talking with Anteucan," said Steinholt, "and he told me that the Lodorians usually make heavy levies on worlds which they discover and dominate. As soon as Teuxical returns to Lodore and announces a new discovery a fleet of those damned monsters is sent out to mop up the new planet. That Malfero, who is the emperor of Lodore, is considerable of a monarch, and it seems that he has a passion for piling up wealth. Gold and platinum are as precious on Lodore as they are here and he also likes pretty stones."

"And what is worse," added Steinholt, "is his practice of enslaving entire populations and making toilers or warriors out of them. Those soldiers on the ship are not Lodorians. Millions of them were seized on some planet and converted into troops. It was a strange conversion, too," said Steinholt, with a shudder. "Their brains were operated on and most of their faculties removed. They have no sense of fear, no consciences, no power of reasoning. They respond only to certain signals on a whistle and their only definite and active impulse is that of murder and destruction."

"There is nothing to do," said Dirk positively, "but to kill all of these interlopers, if we hope to save our world from being desolated."

THE three men looked at each other in silence for a moment and then Dirk, somewhat weakly, rose into a sitting position in the bed which he had been occupying.

"But how," asked Steinholt, "can we kill them? We might, of course, get rid of a few of them, but that simply would lead to our destruction by those who were left."

"There must be some way," asserted Dirk, "and it is up to us to think of it without delay. If we let those Lodorians get a foothold on the world all will be lost."

"The old man seems to be reasonable enough," said Lazarre. "He doesn't seem inclined to be destructive."

"We must not trust him or any of the others," said Dirk imperatively. "We must rid the earth of every one of them. And the sooner we strike the better!"

"It had best be soon if it is to be at all," said Steinholt. "Fragoni has arranged to have Teuxical appear before the Congress, and the meeting has been called for to-night when, I imagine, certain specific demands will be made upon us. We all will go to The Hague together on the ship of the Lodorians."

"And we leave?" questioned Dirk.

"The meeting is set for ten P. M., New York time," said Lazarre. "We will start east at about four o'clock in the morning, I guess, because it will only take a minute or so to arrive at our destination."

"Is Fragoni going?" asked Dirk.

"Naturally," replied Lazarre.

"And Inga?"

"I believe so," Lazarre told him. "Fragoni was both afraid to take her and to leave her behind, but finally he decided that he wanted her with him in case of trouble."

"AND are they—the Lodorians—still here?" queried Dirk.

"Yes," responded Lazarre. "Teuxical returned to his ship last night with Zitlan and his other followers, but they came back late this afternoon, and they are still here. Zitlan seemed to be all right this afternoon, too. They must have used some means of bringing him out of the daze that he was in. We did everything we could to revive you, but none of our measures were effective."

"I'm all right now," asserted Dirk, as he finished attiring himself. "I want to see Fragoni at once."

"We'll go out on the terrace then," said Steinholt. "They are all out there."

Dirk, with his two companions, strolled out through the maze of rooms and corridors that led to the garden which hung so high above the city and the Sound below it.

The first thing that Dirk saw, when he passed out onto the terrace, was the white tunic of Inga, who was leaning against a coping and talking with Zitlan.

The latter was pointing skyward and, very apparently, he was telling her of worlds which circled high among the stars.

As if she were suddenly aware of his presence, Inga turned and saw Dirk and he realized, by the expression on her face, that she was distraught and nervous. She came toward him quickly, after a few words to Zitlan, and the face of the latter darkened. There was hatred in his expression as he stared malevolently at Dirk.

STEINHOLT and Lazarre passed along and joined Fragoni and Teuxical, who were the center of a group that had formed in another part of the terrace.

"Oh, Dirk," said Inga, "I am so afraid of that frightful Zitlan. He has been telling me again that he is going to take me back to his own world with him and it makes me shudder to think of it. He is so strange and queer and his eyes are so terrible. He can't be as young as he looks, because he speaks of years like we speak of minutes. I will die if I ever find myself in that monster's power! He has been telling me of all the creatures he has slain on the worlds on which he has landed, and I tell you, Dirk, that he is cruel and ruthless and horrible."

"He will never have you!" swore Dirk. "And if I hear of any more of his insolence, I will throw him headlong from this terrace."

"Please, Dirk," she begged, "don't do anything—not yet. He is utterly unscrupulous, Dirk. He told me that, even now, he is plotting against some Malfero who rules Lodore like a god, and that he is planning to seize the throne of the planet. He wants to make me the queen of that fearful world when he becomes king. He boasted that, if I were on the throne, millions of people from other worlds would be sacrificed in my honor in the temples of Lodore." Her voice trembled and her eyes were terror-stricken as she continued. "They tear out the hearts of living victims," she whispered, "and burn them on their high and mammoth pyramids."

RAGE took possession of Dirk and, casting a glance at Zitlan, he saw that the Lodorian was smiling insolently at him.

"I'll kill that beast, if it's the last

thing that I do!" he exclaimed to Inga.

"Dirk, Dirk," she implored, "don't even look at him. He is proud and impetuous, and he will kill you in defiance of his own father."

"We will find some way to rid the world of the scourge that has descended upon it," asserted Dirk confidently, "and he will die with the rest of that monstrous crew."

"I am going in, Dirk," Inga said. "Please," she begged, "don't do anything rash. If — something — should happen to you, I would lose all the hope that I have and I would, I think, kill myself."

"Don't lose hope, my dear," said Dirk reassuringly. "I believe that I know of a way to destroy the plague that menaces us."

He pressed her hand and, after she left him, he walked over and joined the other men on the terrace. Zitlan, coming from the terrace wall, stretched out in a chair not far from Dirk.

Teuxical regarded the latter with a countenance that was calm and amicable. "I am sorry, my young friend," he apologized, "that I had to intervene between you and my son." He paused a moment and sat in silence, a thoughtful expression on his face. "Ah," he then said, "what disasters have arisen out of the desire of men for women. In my wanderings over the starlit worlds, I have seen. . . ." He ceased speaking, brooded for a moment, and then shook his head slowly. "But you cannot say that I was not just," he continued, addressing Dirk. "I punished Zitlan for his presumption. Fragoni tells me that the woman has pledged herself to you. Let her pledge be kept!" he exclaimed sternly, looking straight at Zitlan.

"We are the conquerors," asserted the latter boldly, "and to us should belong the spoils of our daring!"

"Silence!" thundered Teuxical. "My own son, above all others, shall be obedient to my commands! Or, like others have done, he shall die because of insubordination!"

ZITLAN, a defiant expression on his face, ceased to speak, but Dirk could see that he was livid with suppressed rage.

"As I was saying," Teuxical remarked, turning to Fragoni, "I am getting old and long have I been weary of conquest. I have seen your world and it pleases me. It is a tiny and peaceful place, far removed from the strife and turbulence of the restless centers of the universe. So it is my will to leave you unscathed and return to Lodore for a brief time to ask of the mighty Malfero the grant of this little provincial land. And then, with his permission, I will return here and rule it with wisdom and benevolence.

"I will bring to you much knowledge, and peace will be to the people of this earth and peace will be to me."

"It is well," replied Fragoni. "No world, I am certain, could hope for a wiser and more just ruler than yourself, and our Congress surely will receive you with acclaim."

Teuxical bowed in recognition of the compliment, and his countenance indicated that he was gratified.

"We will go, now, back to our vessel," he said, addressing the other Lodorians. "We will return for you at the appointed hour and conduct you to our ship," he added, speaking to Fragoni.

"We will be ready," Fragoni replied.

ZITLAN had arisen with the rest of them and Dirk, with a look of contempt and amusement in his eyes, regarded him casually.

"May I have the honor of conducting our guests back to their ship in a plane?" Stanton requested of Fragoni.

The latter nodded and Stanton walked across the terrace in the direction of the landing stage.

Zitlan, as he followed after the others, passed close to Dirk and, pausing for a moment, fixed his hateful eyes on him.

"You dog," he whispered malignant-

ly, "remember what I tell you! The time will come when I will cast you to the carnaphlocti in the dark and icy caverns of sunless Tiganda. You will die," he swore, "the death of a million agonies!"

For a moment Dirk felt an almost irresistible impulse to hurl himself on the Lodorian and slay him.

He managed to maintain his control, however, and only regarded Zitlan with disdain as the latter turned and went on his way.

In another moment the plane, containing Stanton and the Lodorians, was high up in the darkness.

Dirk glanced at the great clock that gleamed atop of the beacon-tower on the Metropole Landing Field.

The hour was close to twelve-thirty A. M.

A MOMENT of silence on the terrace followed the departure of the plane that bore the Lodorians back to their craft.

For an hour the clouds had been gathering in the sky and now a fine, cold rain commenced to fall.

A peal of thunder echoed above them after a sharp flash of lightning had streaked across the black night above them.

A servant appeared from the entrance to the apartment and pressed a button close to the door.

Protective plates of glass noiselessly enveloped the terrace, sheltering those upon it from the inclement weather.

"It is well," remarked Fragoni, breaking the silence, "that we were found by a leader like Teuxical. Our tribute will not be unbearable, and he will bestow many benefits upon us."

"But surely," protested Dirk, "you do not intend to surrender without a struggle! Nothing but disaster," he asserted earnestly, "will come upon the earth if you do. Teuxical may be honest and just but, after all, he neither is immortal nor all-powerful, and something may happen to him at any moment. And there are those like Zitlan who would turn the world over to ravage and rape, and then convert it into a blazing pyre, if they had their way. These vandals," he insisted, "must be slain one and all, or, mark my words, our world will be laid waste."

DIRK spoke with such a sense of conviction that his words held his listeners spellbound.

"Who is Teuxical," he asked, "but the vassal of a monarch whose corsairs, very apparently, are carrying on a war of conquest in the universe? It will be disastrous, I say, to place any dependence in the good will of this one Lodorian. If he, or any of his men, return to that far-off planet where they dwell word will be carried there of the existence of our world. But who can say that Teuxical ever will return here again? It may be the whim of his ruler to refuse his request, or any one of a thousand other events might arise to thwart his desire to live among us. No," concluded Dirk passionately, "it never will do to let that great engine of destruction rise into the skies again!"

"He is right!" asserted Steinholt positively. "It will be far better to annihilate these raiders, if such a thing can be accomplished!"

Lazarre was rather inclined to take sides with Fragoni.

"But how," he demanded, "can such destruction be brought about? We know nothing of the capabilities of that monster that is lying down there in the Sound. It is undoubtedly equipped with the deadliest of devices and they all will be turned upon us if we fail in an effort to destroy the thing and those who have come from space upon it. If there was a way to smite them suddenly, to bring death to the Lodorians and to those swarming, mindless, murderous minions who act in obedience to them, I would favor doing it.

"But, as it is," he concluded, "it seems like inviting disaster even to

think of such an attempt, much less to try it."

"It can be done, though," asserted Dirk, "or there is at least a fighting chance of accomplishing it. The electrosceotan—" He paused, and looked questioningly at Steinholt. "The top of that monster is open and. . . ."

THE Teuton furrowed his brow and considered the proposition for a moment.

"Yes," he said, nodding his head, "it might be done." Again he silently gave the subject his thought. "It is well worth trying," he asserted with an air of decision. "But we will have to make haste," he warned, "if the thing is to be done before the flight to The Hague."

"So be it," said Fragoni. "We will apply ourselves to the task at hand. I, too," he confessed, "had rather see these vandals destroyed like so much vermin rather than have them carry the news of the existence of this earth back into those strange worlds in the depth of space. I will only regret the passing of Teuxical, who could have taught us much wisdom. And now," he continued briskly, "I will place myself under your orders, Dirk. You are the one who suggested this plan and upon you will fall the responsibility of executing it. And, if it succeeds," he added, "the glory will be yours."

"I care little for the glory," replied Dirk, "but I gladly accept the duties and the responsibilities. These," he said to Fragoni, "are my instructions to you. Inasmuch as Teuxical and his captains will return here at about four o'clock in the morning to convey us back to their craft, it will be necessary to have this building emptied of its inhabitants by that time. Let all of those who dwell here depart from it, a few at a time, so as not to excite suspicion. Inga, above all others, must leave and retreat to a place of safety. Then, as the hour approaches for the arrival of the Lodorians, we will escape by plane from one of the rear terraces. They will land in search of us and—well, then they will feel the force of our power."

"I will follow your orders explicitly," promised Fragoni. "I wonder," he added, "where Stanton is? He should be advised of what we are going to attempt."

"He will return in due time," replied Dirk. "And, if not, it will be the worse for him. Lazarre will remain here with you," he then told Fragoni, "and Steinholt and I will now go about our part of the task at hand."

DIRK, followed by Steinholt, hurried across the terrace and, leaving the shelter of its quartzite plates, sought the landing stage.

The rain still was falling and the heavens were congested with dark and heavy clouds.

Dirk, selecting one of the smaller planes, entered the cabin and Steinholt, following after him, closed the door and threw on the lights.

Swiftly they shot straight up into the air, Dirk ignoring all of the rules of flight in his haste to be under way. Once in the westbound lane, he headed his plane toward Manhattan and threw his rheostat wide open. In a few minutes they were skimming over the great city and past the three thousand foot steel tower of the Worldwide Broadcasting Station.

For fifteen minutes more he kept the plane on a straight course and then, bringing it to a quick stop, he let it drop like a plummet toward the earth.

It landed, among many other planes, on the transparent, quartzite roof of a vast building and, looking down into the interior, they could see several rows of great dynamos. Some of them were turning, and the humming that they made could be heard plainly.

DIRK and Steinholt ran rapidly across the roof until they came to a superstructure, which they entered. There was a shaft inside. Dirk pressed a button, and an elevator shot

up and stopped at the door, which automatically flashed open.

He closed it after he and his companion had entered the cage and, dropping rapidly downward, they came to a stop in a lighted chamber that was far below the surface of the ground.

A stoop-shouldered old man greeted them, an expression of surprise on his face.

"Gentlemen!" he exclaimed. "What is—"

"Power, Gaeble!" commanded Steinholt tensely. "Power! Let every dynamo run its swiftest. To-night we have to use for the electrosceotan!"

"But I thought it was peace that those from the stars desired," said the old electrician. "Through my radiovisor I heard—"

"That was sent out," explained Steinholt, "to relieve the fears of the people and to keep them in order."

Swiftly the distorted figure of the old man sped to a great switchboard, where he pressed button after button.

The very ground commenced to vibrate around them and the massive structure seemed to be alive with straining power.

Then Steinholt, going to a corner of the intricate board, adjusted a few levers, while his gnomelike companion watched him carefully.

"And now, Gaeble," the scientist said impressively, "these are your orders. At precisely the hour of four o'clock in the morning make one connection with this switch."

HE indicated, with a stubby finger, the lever to be operated.

"Keep the circuit closed for just four seconds," he added slowly, "and then break it. Do you understand, Gaeble?" he demanded.

"I do," replied the old man.

"Then," continued Steinholt, "after you break that connection you quickly will close this next circuit. Keep it closed for four seconds and then, after opening it for one second, close it again for four seconds. Repeat the procedure twice more, Gaeble, after that, and then await my further instructions. Is everything clear?" he asked.

"It is, sir," the old man replied. "I will follow your orders implicitly."

"There is one thing more," Steinholt said. "Get the Worldwide Tower on the televisor and warn them of what is to happen."

"I will do that immediately," Gaeble replied.

Dirk and Steinholt shot up to the roof again and the building over which they walked seemed to be quivering with life.

They could see that all of the mammoth dynamos beneath them were revolving and the humming which they had heard before had changed into an ugly, vibrant roar.

AGAIN they took flight and, reaching Manhattan, they continued north and east to the shore of Long Island Sound.

Long before the old East River had been filled in and the space which it had occupied reclaimed for building purposes. All indications of its former bed had been obliterated by mammoth terraced structures.

When they reached their destination on the shore of the Sound a small submarine, which Dirk had ordered by radio, was awaiting them.

"Submerge and proceed up the Sound," Dirk ordered the officer, "and take us directly under the craft of the Lodorians."

In a few minutes they were skimming over the surface of the water and, when a sufficient depth had been gained, the tiny boat disappeared beneath the rain-rippled sea.

Dirk sat at a port and watched the aquatic life as it was illuminated by the powerful aquamarine searchlights.

Progress under the water was comparatively slow, as mankind had made but little progress in underwater navigation. Air liners long before had almost superseded travel by land and sea

and the abolition of warfare had swept all of the old navies from the ocean.

It was more than an hour before the officer in charge of the boat announced that the mammoth hull of the monster that was lying on the Sound was visible directly above them.

Both Dirk and Steinholt donned diving apparatus, and the former carefully adjusted the mechanism that was contained in a metallic box about two feet square.

THEN they stepped up into a chamber in the conning tower of the boat and, after a door slipped shut beneath them, water slowly commenced to pour into the compartment.

When it was full a sliding door that was in front of them slowly opened and they passed out onto the deck of the underwater craft.

Steinholt had been provided with some welding apparatus and, in a few minutes, the box which Dirk had carried was attached securely to the bottom of the craft of the Lodorians.

They then reentered the submarine by reversing the process which had attended their exit. Very soon they were in the cabin of the boat again.

"If everything goes well," said Dirk, "those damned Lodorians will never know what struck them."

"I only hope," said Steinholt, "that we don't destroy that leviathan altogether. We might solve the secret of it and then we, too, could ride out into the heart of the universe."

"It is impossible to imagine what will happen," Dirk replied, "until after we launch our attack."

Both of the men were silent during the return trip of the small undersea craft, which emerged at its dock a little before three-thirty in the morning.

"We'll have to hurry," urged Dirk nervously, "because we will need a little time to make preparations after we get back to Fragoni's."

They entered their plane and Dirk shot it swiftly up into the night, following the red shaft of light that rose almost directly from the point at which they had made their landing.

THEN, having reached the eastbound level, he headed straight in the direction of the palace of Fragoni.

Dirk cast a glance at the great city that lay far beneath him. High up into the heavens it tossed the fulgerant fires that betokened its wealth and power. And, down among those myriad lights, millions and millions of people were restless under the danger that menaced them. It was only a matter of moments now before their fate, and the fate of their great metropolis, would be decided. By dawn they would be free forever from the threat of subjugation and slavery or else they, and all that they had toiled and striven for, would be the veriest dust of dying embers.

And whatever befell them likewise would befall the rest of the world and every living thing that moved upon it.

Dirk was high above Fragoni's when he stopped the forward flight of the plane and, dropping it rapidly through the misty night, brought up easily on the landing stage. The other planes which had been there when he and Steinholt had taken their departure were gone and Dirk felt a sense of relief when he observed this. Inga, then, must have departed with the other occupants of the colossal structure. Things were going according to the plan that he had conceived. He stepped out of the cabin, followed by Steinholt, and proceeded hastily along the terrace and turned the corner into the garden.

Then he came to an abrupt halt because there, before him, was Zitlan, with one of the deadly ray-tubes of the Lodorians in his hand.

DIRK knew immediately that something unexpected had happened and that he was in the power of one who not only hated him but who had an unholy desire for Inga.

He realized, too, that any show of resistance would be nothing short of

suicide, for he was well aware of the deadliness of the strange weapon with which he and Steinholt were being menaced by the gloating Lodorian.

"One false move and you die!" warned Zitlan. "Come forward, now, and join those two others over whom Anteucan and Huazibar are watching."

Dirk and Steinholt promptly obeyed the command of Zitlan and walked over to where Fragoni and Lizarre were being guarded by two of the conquerors.

The rain had ceased to fall, but the skies were dark and overcast with heavy clouds. There was an occasional flash of lightning, and thunder rolled and echoed through the night.

The terrace, however, was brightly illuminated and every detail of the scene around him was visible to Dirk.

He saw Stanton, on another part of the terrace, standing among some Lodorians he had not seen before. Stanton, apparently, was not being treated as a prisoner and Dirk wondered, rather vaguely, why this was.

"What happened?" Dirk asked Fragoni quietly.

"According to what I have heard," the latter replied, "Zitlan murdered his father in a fit of rage, and has taken over the command of the ship. Many of the Lodorians are his adherents and even those who do not favor him are so terrified that they will be obedient to his wishes."

"And Igna?" questioned Dirk.

"She is inside the apartment," said Fragoni, a note of desperation in his voice. "Zitlan surprised us completely and he and his men had us covered before we realized that Teuxical was not among them."

ZITLAN, in the meantime, had entered the suite of Fragoni and he now came out, Inga walking before him.

She was silent and proudly erect but there was a pallor in her face that indicated her realization of the danger that she was threatened with.

When Dirk saw her she gave him a brave smile, which he answered with a glance of reassurance.

He could see the great clock in the Metropole Tower, and he noticed, with a feeling of grave apprehension, that it was twenty minutes to four o'clock.

There were only a few minutes more in which to make a desperate and apparently a hopeless effort to save Inga, his friends and himself from a catastrophe which he had been instrumental in contriving.

Then Zitlan stood before him, haughty and arrogant, his lowering countenance ugly with hatred.

"So, dog," he said, "you who dared to defy Zitlan now stand before him a captive!"

Neither Dirk nor any one of the three others who were guarded with him replied to the utterance.

"You and that woman of yours," continued the Lodorian insolently, "both are my prisoners to do with as I please. Your fate," he continued, "I already have planned for you and I assure you that it will not be as pleasurable as the one to which she is destined. You will find that Tigana, on which you and those with you will be cast, is a world of terror such as you never could dream of. Even the monsters which crawl through the deliriums of the mind are not as horrible as those which infest the mad and haunted world of which I speak."

HE paused a moment, a cruel smile on his face, as if he wished the full import of his words to sear themselves into the minds of the doomed men.

"But the woman," he added, "will return to Lodore with me and be the queen of all women. And soon," he said savagely, "she may be queen of all Lodore, of the worlds which pay tribute to Lodore, and of other worlds which I will conquer and ravage. My father stood in my way and he died at my own hands. So will others perish

who thwart my ambition, and I will become supreme in the universe!"

A feeling of reckless fury possessed Dirk as he listened to the words of Zitlan and he felt an almost irresistible desire to drive a fist square between the mad, glittering eyes of the Lodorian.

He glanced at the great clock, however, and he saw that the time to act had not yet come. At the last moment he would make one desperate attempt to frustrate the evil designs of Zitlan. If it failed—well, all would be lost. But it was a far better thing to die resisting the despicable Zitlan and his minions than it would be to live and to know that, without a struggle, he had abandoned to degradation the girl he loved.

"This world of yours will be my world," he heard Zitlan boast, "and the spoils from it will add to my riches. This one here," he continued, indicating Stanton, "has offered to show me where all of the treasures of the earth may be found. And, as a reward, he will return to Lodore with me and there be elevated to a high position."

THAT, then, was why Stanton was not under guard like the rest of them.

"Our good friend, Stanton," said Lazarre, "seems to have become something of a Judas."

"And let his name be forever cursed, like the name of Judas," said Dirk.

"Silence!" thundered the Lodorian. "I, Zitlan, am speaking." He paused a moment. "When I garner up the treasures of this world in the way of precious stones and metals I also shall gather more priceless loot in the way of women. And then, having taken all that I desire, I will lay waste to this earth so that those who survive will fear the name of Zitlan and will grovel before him like a god when once again he appears to them."

While Zitlan had been speaking, Dirk had been studying the opponents with whom he soon had to clash.

The two Lodorians who were standing guard over himself and his companions were close to his left side. Zitlan was directly in front of him, and there were seven of his minions clustered behind him.

Again Dirk glanced at the great dial of the clock, and he saw that it was seven minutes of four.

The moment had come to act if action was to prove of any avail.

"I will—"

But the words of Zitlan were interrupted by Dirk, who suddenly made a mighty sweep with his left arm and knocked the deadly tubes from the hands of Anteucan and Huazibar. Startled by the assault, they went reeling backward. At almost the same instant Dirk leaped forward and, seizing Zitlan, hurled him among those Lodorians who had been massed behind him. Then he threw himself violently into the tangled mass, his fists driving in and out with deadly strength.

OUT of the corner of one eye he saw Inga pass the melee and dart swiftly to the corner of the terrace. Instead of passing around to the landing stage, however, she lingered there and watched the combat.

Dirk, as he fought, became conscious that Steinholt and Fragoni were at his side, battling with him against his enemies. He saw, too, that Stanton had retired to the far end of the terrace and that he was watching the struggle with frightened eyes.

"We must reach the plane and get away," gasped Dirk. "In another three minutes—"

He felled a Lodorian who, having lost his tube, was about to grapple with him. He saw Steinholt send another one of their opponents reeling backward.

"Fragoni!" he exclaimed. "The plane! Get in with Inga! We will come!"

Even as he spoke his fists were flailing back and forth between each one of his staccatto commands.

He saw beneath him a hand reaching toward a tube, and he kicked the instrument of death. It hurtled over in the direction of Stanton and landed close to his feet. Stanton might have picked it up and been in possession of the means of aiding his old friends or his new allies. But he shrunk away, panic-stricken, from the thing that lay so close to his reach.

A Lodorian leaped upon Dirk's back in an effort to bring him to the ground, but he stooped swiftly forward and his assailant was catapulted over his head into those who were in front of him.

HE caught a flash of the contorted face of Zitlan flying through the air, and saw him land with a crash on the terrace, and lie there writhing in pain.

"Steinholt, Lazarre!" he said convulsively. "We've got to strike once more! And then—run!"

He plunged into their enemies with every bit of energy that he had left, and saw two of them toppling down. Then, like a flash, he turned to Lazarre, who was trying to fight off three of the Lodorians. Seizing one of them by the waist, Dirk hurled him backward and he disposed of another one in the same manner. His sheer desperation seemed to have given him unbounded strength and power.

Lazarre sent his third opponent down with a blow under the chin and then, with Dirk at his side, they turned to the assistance of Steinholt.

With one mad rush they crashed into a group of Lodorians and sent them reeling away like so many nine-pins.

"Now! To the plane!" exclaimed Dirk, taking to his heels across the terrace. Steinholt and Lazarre followed after him and, turning the corner, they saw that the ship was in place and that Fragoni was anxiously waiting by the door of the cabin. Inga, Dirk knew, already was inside and safe. He stood aside while Steinholt and Lazarre leaped in. During the momentary wait he caught a glimpse of the great clock. It was one minute to four. Dirk jumping into the plane and switched on the helicopter without even waiting to close the cabin door.

THE ship shot skyward like a rocket. When it reached an altitude of thirty-five hundred feet, he turned it north and raced at top speed in that direction.

It was miles away from the palace of Fragoni in less than thirty seconds. Dirk then stopped the plane and held it poised in the air with the helicopter.

The skies were turgid and black and the massed clouds, reflecting the lights of the great city below them, were permeated with an ugly, feverish, red glow.

From where they were hanging in mid-air, the occupants of the plane could plainly see the sparkling palace of Fragoni towering high up into the darkness of the night.

The lights of the magnificent mansion were reflected far out into the Sound where, looming in the golden ripples, lay the sinister monster from the terrible depths of unfathomable space.

Dirk took a watch from his pocket and, after glancing at it, he hastily replaced it.

"Two seconds more," he said, "and—"

A SHARP and dazzling bolt of greenish fire came hurling suddenly out of the west and, with a thunderous concussion, seemed to fasten itself on the crest of Fragoni's palace.

It trembled and quivered, as if endowed with some uncanny life and power, as it remained there against the darkness, throwing a weird, green tinge over the water and up into the skies.

Blue waves of light could be seen pulsing and racing along the terrible beam and there, where it had fastened itself, they seemed to disappear in the vast and crumbling structure.

For four seconds that destructive

streak of light, one end of which was lost back in the mists that concealed Manhattan, tore at the proud pile.

And, as the stone crumbled and the steelite fused under the mighty assault, an ominous roar swept through the night. The air was so violently agitated that the plane, miles away, tossed up and down like a tiny boat on a stormy sea.

Then suddenly the bolt was gone, but its livid image still burned in the eyes of those who had been watching it.

Once more, it came hurling out of the west and, like the fang of some great and deadly serpent, darted into the monster that lay in the waters of the Sound.

Dirk and his companions could see plainly, by the light of the bolt itself, that it had crashed into the well from which the Lodorians first had appeared, and that it was beating and hammering its way into the very vitals of the craft.

DAZZLING, blinding fire seemed to pour from the aperture through which the bolt had passed. The clamor that arose was deafening.

Then again the streak of fires was withdrawn, leaving the night intensely black until, in a moment more, it came thundering out of the west again and, with an impact that made the land and the sea and the very heavens tremble, hurled its way into the depths of the doomed leviathan.

Twice again it fell, a fiery scimitar out of the darkness, and twice again it careened at the vitals of the stricken monster.

Then, after the assault was over, the ship still floated on the surface of the Sound and its shell, as far as Dirk and the others could judge, still was unscathed.

"We will soon know our fate," remarked Steinholt calmly. "If that didn't kill those beasts we might as well give up our ghosts."

"I'll drop the plane a little lower and a little nearer to the ship," said Dirk.

"I don't believe that any life is surviving in that thing."

"My beautiful palace is nothing but dust," sighed Fragoni mournfully. "And all my beautiful treasures, too."

"And that beautiful Zitlan," Lazarre reminded him, "and his beautiful boy friends, they are all dust too, thank God!"

"It was a queer fate that Stanton met," suggested Dirk. "He thought that he would save his life by going over to our enemies, and, instead of that, he lost it."

"POOR Stanton," said Steinholt. "He was born that way, I suppose, and I, for one, am ready to forgive and forget him. And now," continued the Teuton, "I hope that we didn't do too much damage to that little boat of the Lodorians. If we could get just a little peep at the inside of it we might learn the secret of its contrivance. And then, my friends, we could do a little journeying ourselves."

"Have you any theory regarding it?" asked Fragoni.

"Teuxical intimated that it rode the magnetic currents which, of course, flow through all the suns and planets in the universe," replied Steinholt. "We have been working along that line ourselves, of course, and it probably won't be very long anyway before we have the solution of interplanetary travel."

"Those Lodorians would have solved it for us if it hadn't been for that artificial lightning," said Lazarre. "That's powerful stuff, Steinholt."

"Yes, with that three-thousand-foot Worldwide Tower to hurl it from," agreed Steinholt, "we can get a fair range with it. If the Lodorians hadn't left the well of their ship open, though, the lightning wouldn't have done us much good. I was afraid, too, for a time, that we might have trouble in welding that automatic wireless circuit box to the bottom of the ship."

Dirk, in the meantime, had brought the plane down to within a half-mile

of the leviathan, and he was holding it poised there.

"It seems to me," he said, after scrutinizing the monster for a couple of minutes, "that it is moving in the water. It is!" he exclaimed. "Steinholt! Look!"

ONLY a comparatively short time had elapsed since the last bolt of lightning had vanished back into the darkness.

"It is still rocking with the force of the shock that we gave it," asserted Steinholt. "You would be rocking, too, if you had been tickled by a bolt like that one."

"It is rising, I tell you!" said Dirk. "The front end of it is slowly getting higher in the water!"

"You're right, Dirk," said Fragoni, excitement straining his voice. "Look! It just dropped back into the water!"

Then, as they watched, the movements of the leviathan became more and more agitated, until it was churning up the waves around it like a wounded and agonized monster of the sea.

Suddenly the front end tilted upward and the monster rose clear of the water. It shot straight up into the air at a speed so terrific that they could scarcely follow it.

"It's gone!" gasped Fragoni. "Those brainless, mindless automatons must have survived!"

"No," remarked Steinholt thoughtfully. "I don't believe that there is any life left on that thing. No one had closed the well when it rose, and it would mean death to go out into space with the ship in that condition."

"Then what made it go up?" demanded Lazarre. "Can the damn thing run itself, Steinholt?"

"I imagine," recalled the Teuton, "that our bolts killed every living thing that was on the craft but that, at the same time, they set the mechanism of the monster into action. Ah," he moaned, "but that is too bad. We could have learned much by an examination of the interior of that liner of the air."

A CRY from Inga startled them and they saw that she was looking skyward with terror in her eyes.

They followed her gaze and there, streaking through the black clouds, they saw a long trail of white fire.

"It's that thing!" exclaimed Fragoni. "I tell you that those upon it still live and that they are about to wreak vengeance upon us."

"No," said Steinholt positively. "You are wrong, Fragoni. What is happening may be almost as disastrous, though," he admitted. "That leviathan is in its death agonies; it is a metal monster gone mad, and none can say what will happen before it expires."

"The place for us," asserted Dirk hurriedly, "is in the Worldwide Tower. There we can keep track of what is transpiring and try to decide what to do."

The others agreed with him and, seeking the westward level of flight, he sped the plane in the direction of the mammoth pyramid from which the news of the world was broadcast.

They reached the vast structure in a few minutes, and, after dropping the plane on a landing stage, they went into the operating room.

Here they learned quickly that the craft of the Lodorians was doing incalculable damage, and that it was throwing the population of the world into an unprecedented panic.

It was, apparently, following an erratic, uncertain orbit that took it far out into space and then back quite close to the surface of the earth again.

IT had passed through the very heart of Chicago within a few yards of the ground, and it had cut and burned a swath more than a mile wide through the buildings of that metropolis.

Other cities in America had felt the devastating effects of its irresistible and molten heat and, within a short time, thousands of people had been slain by it.

Time and again, from the terrace of the great tower, Dirk and his companions saw the skies above them light up as that terrible, blazing, projectile which, uncontrolled, went hurtling on its way through the night.

For three hours it careened on its mad course and hysteria reigned throughout the cities of the whole civilized world.

But then a report came from a rocket-liner that had left Berlin en route for San Francisco.

"Either a great meteor or that leviathan of the Lodorians just swept down past us in mid-Atlantic and plunged into the sea. Apparently it has exploded, for it has thrown a great column of water for miles up into the air. We are stopping and standing by, although the heat is intense and clouds of steam are rising from the sea."

As the minutes passed by after the report from the rocket-ship had been received, the disappearance from the sky of the flaming craft from space seemed to confirm the belief that it had been swallowed by the ocean. This was accepted as a certainty by eight o'clock in the morning.

"Ah," sighed Steinholt, "if only it had crashed on land somewhere. If there only was enough of it left for us to—"

"Enough of any damn contraption of that kind," swore Lazarre fervently, "is altogether too much. I hope, for one, that its fragments are scattered so far that we never can put them together again."

DIRK and Inga leaned against one of the parapets that evening on a gardened terrace of his own great mansion in Manhattan.

Their little party had gone there after leaving the Worldwide Tower in the morning.

After resting during the day, Lazarre and Fragoni were somewhere together, discussing the plans for a new palace to take the place of the one that was destroyed so that Zitlan and his minions might die in its ruins.

Steinholt, elsewhere, was delving into oceanography and submarine engineering, in an attempt to learn whether or not it would be feasible to fish for the remains of the lost ship of Lodore.

"It seems like a dream, doesn't it, Dirk?" the girl remarked. "It is difficult to believe that we actually have seen and talked with people from some far-away world."

Together they looked up into the crystalline skies, where mazes of shining stars gave testimony to the countless worlds which were wheeling around them.

"And just to think, Dirk," Inga continued proudly, "that it was you who saved this world and all of its people from that horrible Zitlan and his horde."

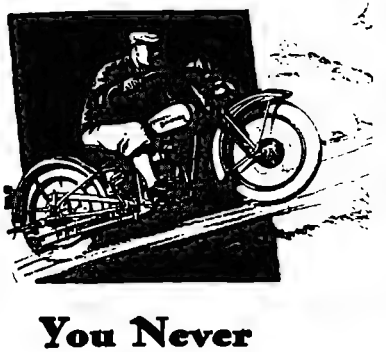
"I saved you," he told her gravely and tenderly, "and that somehow means more to me than saving all of this world and all of the other worlds which are rolling through the uncharted ways of time and space."

COMING—

Murder Madness

An Extraordinary Novel

***By* MURRAY LEINSTER**



You Never Tire of It!

EAGER power under instant control — speed that leaves the car-parades behind — lightning response to throttle and brakes — these are just a few of the thousand thrills of motorcycling. Ask any Harley-Davidson rider — he'll tell you of dozens more. They are all yours at low cost, in a Harley-Davidson "45"—the wonderful Twin at a popular price.

Let your dealer show you the 1930 features of this motorcycle — try the comfortable, low-swung saddle — get the "feel" of this wonder Twin. Ask about his Pay-As-You-Ride Plan.

Ride a

Mail the Coupon!

for literature showing our full line of Singles, Twins, and Sidecars. Motorcycle prices range from $235 f. o. b. factory.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON

HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR COMPANY
Dept. N. S. G., Milwaukee, Wis.

Interested in your motorcycles. Send literature.

Name .....

Address .....

My age is ☐ 16-19 years, ☐ 20-30 years, ☐ 31 years and up, ☐ under 16 years. Check your age group.

Encouraged by $100

"Perhaps you will be interested to learn that I have succeeded in selling a short story to 'War Birds,' aviation magazine, for which I received a check for $100. The story is the first I have attempted. As the story was paid for at higher than the regular rates, I certainly felt encouraged."

Darrell Jordan,
Box 277, Friendship, N. Y.

Self-starters will like this NEW way of Learning to WRITE

Newspaper Institute training in writing has become thoroughly established as a practical, inspiring, productive method. This holds good not only among literary lights, editors and publishers, but also among the best of all judges—men and women who have taken the training and profited by it.

Writing No Career for Leaners

Our years of experience with writing-aspirants of all ages and classes have brought forth many significant facts—among them this:

The best student-writers . . . and the best writers . . . are those who can think and act for themselves, once they are put in the right trail. They do not require close surveillance while under instruction. We call these people self-starters. The term explains itself.

We provide the material, the plan, the special guides, the text, the story writing assignments on definite schedule. Furthermore, after giving the student time to write up his assignment, our copy desk furnishes him the means of ascertaining how close he has come to the professional standard. Here, in short, is a complete outfit of tools . . . the rest is up to the self-starter. It is obvious that as direct and uncomplicated a method permits a maximum of instruction at a minimum of cost, placing N. I. A. training within the reach of anyone.

Many Students and Former Students now Writing for Publication

Thousands of men and women, and many young people, have taken N. I. A. training and found it as practical, as stirring, and as true-to-expectations as we represent it to be. For N. I. A. training teaches writing by the intensely interesting New York newspaper copy-desk method . . . the type of newswriting experience that produces nearly nine out of ten successful writers.

Best of all, the cost of this training is modest, and the student may carry it on at home, entirely in spare time.

To those new to the writing business, the Institute points not to the immense royalties of best-selling authors, but to $25, $50, and $100 readily paid for material that takes little time to write . . . short articles, recipes, humorous pieces, short stories, things that can be easily and naturally written in spare time. There are many profitable fields for those who want to make their writing ability pay prompt dividends. We make no extravagant claims as to what the N. I. A. method can do for anyone's fame or wealth. We do maintain that, with rare exceptions, N. I. A. training will increase anyone's writing knowledge, writing ability, writing confidence, and writing income.

How You Start

To insure prospective student members against wasting their time and money, we have prepared a unique Writing Aptitude Test. This tells you whether you possess the fundamental qualities necessary to successful writing—acute observation, dramatic instinct, creative imagination, etc. You'll enjoy this test. Newspaper Institute of America, 1776 Broadway, New York.

Newspaper Institute of America,
1776 Broadway, New York.
Send me, without cost or obligation, your Writing Aptitude Test and further information about writing for profit.

Mr. }
Mrs. } ——
Miss }

Address .....

(All correspondence confidential.—No salesman will call on you)
2C-370

Using Tobacco

Perhaps you've tried to stop using tobacco only to find that the habit has such a hold on you that you gave up trying.

You know, better than anyone else, whether tobacco is hurting you, and if it is, that sooner or later, it will undermine your health. Heart trouble, indigestion, dyspepsia, nervousness, insomnia, poor eyesight—these and many other disorders can often be traced directly to the use of tobacco, according to good medical authority. Besides it is an expensive, utterly useless habit.

Let Us Help You To Banish The Habit

No matter how firm a grip tobacco has on you—no matter whether you've been smoking cigars, pipe or cigarettes or chewing plug or pipe cut for a month or 50 years—Tobacco Redeemer will in most cases remove all craving for tobacco in any form in a very few days. It does its work so quickly that all tobacco "hunger" is gone almost before you know it. The desire for a smoke or chew usually begins to decrease after the very first dose.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind—it is in no sense a tobacco substitute. It does not cause the slightest shock to the nervous system; on the contrary, it often helps to quiet the nerves and make you feel better in every way.

SEND for PROOF

Get our free booklet. It tells you all about the deadly effects of tobacco and how easy it is now to quit. We will also send you copies of letters from confirmed users telling how this simple, home-treatment freed them absolutely from the habit. Just mail coupon—or a postal will do.

NEWELL PHARMACAL CO.
Dept. 793 Clayton Station St. Louis, Mo.

Send me without obligation to me in any way, proof that Tobacco Redeemer will positively free me from the Tobacco Habit or my money will be refunded.

Name .....

Street and No. .....

Town ..... State .....

HYPNOTISM

Would you possess that strange mysterious power which charms and fascinates men and women, influences their thoughts, controls their desires and makes you supreme master of every situation! Life is full of alluring possibilities for those who master the secrets of hypnotic influences; for those who develop their magnetic powers. You can learn at home, cure diseases and bad habits without drugs, win the friendship and love of others, increase your income, gratify your ambitions, drive worry and trouble from your mind, improve your memory, overcome domestic difficulties, gain the most thrilling entertainment ever witnessed and develop a wonderfully magnetic will power that will enable you to overcome all obstacles to your success.

You can hypnotize people instantaneously—quick as a flash—put yourself or anyone else to sleep at any hour of the day or night or banish pain and suffering. Our free book tells you the secrets of this wonderful science. It explains exactly how you can use this power to better your condition in life. It is enthusiastically endorsed by ministers of the gospel, lawyers, doctors, business men, and society women. It benefits everybody. It costs nothing. We give it away to advertise our institution. Write for it today. (Use a letter with a 5-cent stamp.)

SAGE INSTITUTE, Dept. 617H, Rue de l'Isly, 9, Paris VIII, France

How To Secure A Government Position

Why worry about strikes, layoffs, hard times? Get a Government job! Increased salaries, steady work, travel, good pay. Examinations coming. I'll help you become a Custom House Clerk, Railway Postal Clerk, Post Office Clerk, City Mail Carrier, Rural Carrier or get into any other Government job you want. I was a Secretary-Examiner of Civil Service Commission for 8 years. Have helped thousands.

NOW FREE

My 32-page book tells about the jobs open—and how I can help you get one. Write TODAY. ARTHUR R. PATTERSON, Civil Service Expert. PATTERSON SCHOOL, 1032 Wisner Building, Rochester, N. Y.

OLD MONEY and stamps WANTED

POST YOURSELF! It pays! I paid J. D. Martin, Virginia, $200 for a single copper cent. Mr. Manning, New York, $2,500 for one silver dollar. Mrs. G. F. Adams $740 for a few old coins. I want all kinds of old coins, medals, bills and stamps. I pay big cash premiums.

WILL PAY $100 FOR DIME

1894-S Mint; $50 for 1913 Liberty Head Nickel (not buffalo) and hundreds of other amazing prices for coins. Get in touch with me. Send 4c for Large Illustrated Coin Folder. It may mean much profit to you. Write today to

NUMISMATIC COMPANY OF TEXAS
Dept. 162 FORT WORTH, TEXAS
(Largest Rare Coin Establishment in U. S.)

TYPEWRITER ½ Price

World's best Underwood, Remington, Royal, Smith-Premier, etc., completely refinished like new, at ½ price. Easy terms—as low as 10c a day.

SEND NO MONEY!

All late models, perfect in every detail. Fully guaranteed for ten years. Send no money—but Free catalog shows actual machine in full colors. Get our direct-to-you easy payment plan and 10 days free trial offer. Actually valves—send at once.

Free Trial

International Typewriter Exch., 231 W. Monroe St., Dept. 572, Chicago

HAPPY? HEALTHY? HEARTY? why not?

"The Seat of Health"

Substantially Built to Last a Lifetime—Compact—Portable —folds into suitcase

REDUCER BODY BUILDER | ROWING MACHINE ABDOMINAL CHAIR | PRACTICAL PORTABLE | NOISELESS INEXPENSIVE

Really a *Portable Home Gymnasium*

This ingenious apparatus is scientifically designed to positively re-build, beautify and strengthen every INTERNAL ORGAN and muscle of the body by an automatic gliding motion. Its wonderfully exhilarating action and tonic effect on the entire body seem almost magical! Fat melts away, strength rapidly increases, digestion improves, constipation and gaseous conditions disappear, for the "SEAT OF HEALTH" actually builds a Brand New PERFECT Body, radiant with Sparkling Health, vibrant with Pep and Power.

Five minutes daily fascinating play, even more pleasurable than rowing, brings these astonishing and guaranteed results in surprisingly short time. There has NEVER been a device like this before. NEVER anything so simple, speedy and sure. Instantly adjustable for use by weakest child or strongest athlete. Reaches the VITAL SPOTS—takes off that "pouch." Fully illustrated Chart shows every move and makes failure impossible.

Visit Demonstration Salon—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington.

CLIP AND MAIL TO-DAY

HEALTH DEVELOPING APPARATUS CO., INC.,
1 Park Place, New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen: Please send FREE booklet about your "SEAT OF HEALTH." No obligation. I am interested.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

M-3

1000 HOTEL POSITIONS OPEN!

BE A HOTEL MANAGER

Hotels, clubs, apartment hotels everywhere are calling for managers. Splendid salaries, fine living, luxurious surroundings for you!

Hotels, restaurants, clubs, apartment hotels, hospitals, institutions, schools and colleges everywhere need trained men. Over 70,000 positions as Manager, Assistant Manager, Steward, Engineer and scores of other executive positions paying $2,500 to $10,000 a year open annually in hotels of the United States. Nearly one and three-quarter billions of dollars' worth of NEW HOTELS, APARTMENT HOTELS, CLUBS and INSTITUTIONS being built this year will need over 200,000 trained men. Hotels start you at salaries up to $3,500 a year, with living usually included.

Previous Experience Unnecessary

You can have one of these fascinating big-pay positions. Thru our Simplified Home Study Plan we quickly qualify you for a well-paid position. Age is no obstacle—young and old alike have equal chance for success. A common school education is all you need.

EARN $2,500 TO $10,000 A YEAR

We Put Our Students in Touch With Positions

We train you and put you in touch with big opportunities. All of your training under the personal supervision of Clifford Lewis, who has been appointed Managing Consultant by over 300 hotels thruout the United States. Our students employed by leading hotels everywhere.

Send today for Free Book, "Your Big Opportunity," explaining our Money Back Agreement and showing how we can train you for one of these splendid positions.

LEWIS HOTEL TRAINING SCHOOLS
Room CD-8101 Clifford Lewis, President Washington, D. C.

The Original and Only School of its Kind in the World

OPPORTUNITY COUPON

Proof

Albert H. LaRue—"I am very much pleased by my new position as Manager. I owe it a considerable increase in salary and am finding occasion every day to put into practice the things I learned from the Lewis Course."

R. J. Gross—"I have been appointed Assistant Manager of this 400-room Apartment Hotel. I can never thank the Lewis Schools enough for their assistance."

LEWIS HOTEL TRAINING SCHOOLS,
Room CD-8101, Washington, D. C.

Send me the **Free Book**, "Your Big Opportunity," without obligation.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Money Making Tools

Earn As You Learn

I tell you how to start earning extra money a few weeks after beginning my training.

Copy This Jack and Get This Draftsman's Rule FREE

Automobiles—Electricity—Motor Buses—Aviation—Building Construction.

There are jobs for Draftsmen in all of these industries and in hundreds of others.

Aviation is expanding to enormous proportions.

Electricity is getting bigger every day.

Motor Bus Building is becoming a leading world industry.

Building of stores, homes, factories and office buildings is going on all the time.

I train you at home, in Drafting. Keep the job you have now while learning drafting; I have trained men who are making from $3,500 to $9,000 a year.

There is a big future for draftsmen because you plan and supervise the work of others, or you go into business for yourself. Get started now toward a better position, paying a good, straight salary. Inside work.

Employment Service After training I help you to get a job without charging you a cent. Employers of Draftsmen come to me for men because they know that DobeTrained Men make good as they have learned drafting by actually doing the work themselves.

Money Back Agreement

I train you at home under a positive Money-Back Agreement. If my training does not satisfy you after you have finished, you get every penny back.

Age or Lack of Education No Drawback

Previous experience is not necessary. You do not need to be a college man or high school graduate.

Get My Pay-Raising Plan—also FREE

I'll train you at home. —Engineer Dobe

If You Earn Less Than $70 a Week—Write Me Today!

If you will mail church at once I'll send you this FREE, "My Pay-Raising Plan."

Mail coupon, at once with copy of Jack. Get "My Pay-Raising Plan" and "Successful Draftsmanship". You owe it to yourself to find out what a big opportunity there is for Draftsmen. These two books are Free. They come post-paid. Mail the Coupon for them TODAY.

Engineer Dobe, 1951 LAWRENCE AVE. Div. 15-63 CHICAGO

MONEY MAKING TOOLS COUPON

Engineer Dobe, 1951 Lawrence Ave., Div. 15-63 Chicago

Here's my copy of Jack. Send me free of all cost your book, "Successful Draftsmanship", also plan to earn money while learning, and proof of the money paying positions. Also your pay book "My Pay-Raising Plan." Also tell me about your Money-Making Tools which you furnish. Send the free Postat Rule.

Name ..... Age .....

Address .....

Post Office ..... State .....

Get Strong QUICKLY

Giant Chest Expander ONLY $1.00

Here's an unheard of opportunity for everyone to develop his muscles and obtain great strength by using our heavy-tensioned exerciser. Resistance to 100 lbs. Complete instructions with each exerciser. Also made in cable form in 4 convenient sizes, as illustrated below. Adjustable to 400 lbs. resistance.

5 CABLE EXERCISER	$2.00
10 CABLE EXERCISER	$4.00
15 CABLE EXERCISER	$6.00
20 CABLE EXERCISER	$8.00

SEND NO MONEY

Simply fill in the coupon below and mail it to the address given, naming the exerciser you want sent to you. We will mail you the exerciser and you can pay the postman plus a few cents postage on arrival. Get going on the road to health, strength and success today. Fill it in now!

PROGRESSIVE EXERCISER CO.,
5003 Langdon Bldg., Grand St. and Broadway, N. Y. City
Gentlemen: Please send me your $ ———— exerciser. It is understood that I will pay the postman plus a few cents postage, on delivery.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

450 Miles on a Gallon of Gas!

According to a recent article by the president of the world's largest motor research corporation, there is enough energy in a gallon of gasoline if converted 100% in mechanical energy to run a four cylinder car 450 miles.

NEW GAS SAVING INVENTION ASTONISHES CAR OWNERS

A marvelous device, already installed on thousands of cars, has accomplished wonders in utilizing a portion of this waste energy and is producing mileage tests that seem unbelievable. Not only does it save gasoline, but it also creates more power, gives instant starting, quick pick-up, and eliminates carbon.

FREE SAMPLE and $100 a Week

To obtain national distribution quickly, men are being appointed everywhere to help supply the tremendous demand. Free samples furnished to workers. Write today to H. Oliver, Pres., for this free sample and big money making offer.

WHIRLWIND MFG. CO.
888-124-A Third St., Milwaukee, Wisc.

BEST SHIRTS AT LOWEST PRICES

AGENTS WANTED

To represent old established firm, and take orders. Make Big Money every day! Big complete line direct to wearer. Shirts of all kinds, Underwear, Hat, Pajamas, Night Shirts, Coveralls, Pants, Sweaters, Raincoats, Riding Breeches and Chilprufe Pure wools. Everything guaranteed. Experience unnecessary. Big Outfit Free! Write quick.

SIMMONS SHIRT CO., Dept. 75
4852-58 Lincoln Ave., Chicago

Amazingly Easy Way to get into ELECTRICITY

Don't spend your life waiting for $5 raises in a dull, hopeless job. Now and forever . . . say good-bye to 25 and 35 dollars a week. Let me teach you how to prepare for positions that lead $50, $60 and up to $200 a week in Electricity.

Learn Without Books or Lessons in 90 Days In the Great Coyne Shops

Lack of experience—age or advanced education hurts no one. I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake—I don't expect you to. The secret of Coyne training is that it is ALL PRACTICAL WORK. No books—no dry lessons—YOU LEARN BY DOING on REAL ELECTRICAL MACHINERY. Everything from door-bells to power plants with instructors at your side at all times.

You can Earn while Learning, too

If you're short of money my Employment Department will help you FIND PART TIME WORK, and when you graduate they will help you get that BIG PAY ELECTRICAL JOB. I've done all this for thousands of others—I'll do the same for you.

AVIATION, RADIO AND AUTOMOBILE ELECTRICITY NOW

Right now I'm including my big new Aviation Electricity, Radio and Automobile Electricity courses at no extra cost.

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
H. C. LEWIS, Pres. Established 1899
500 S. Paulina Street Dept. 30-66 Chicago, Ill.

GET THE FACTS

Coyne is your one great chance to get into Electricity. Every obstacle is removed. This school is 30 years old—COYNE training is tested—proven beyond all doubt—endorsed by many large electrical concerns. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book of 150 photographs . . . facts . . . jobs . . . salaries . . . opportunities. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon. GET THIS FREE BOOK.

H. C. LEWIS, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. 30-66
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Please send me your Free, Illustrated Book on Electricity and Coyne. No obligation. Give details of special offer too.

Name . . . .

Address . . .

City . . . . . State .

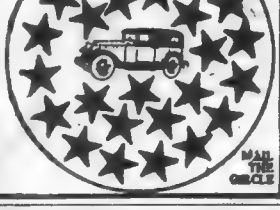
Who Wants an Auto FREE?

STUDEBAKER—BUICK—NASH! Your choice! OR $2000.00 CASH

Thousands of dollars in new autos and grand prizes will positively be given free to advertise and make new friends for my firm. Choice of Studebaker or Buick or Nash new 4-door sedan delivered free, or $2000.00 cash. Also Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Chevrolet, Fords, diamonds, other fine prizes and cash will be given free. No problems to do. No fine writing required. No words to make. No figures to add. Bank guarantees all prizes.

Pick Your Lucky Star!

All the stars in the circle are exactly alike except one. That star is different to all the others and it may be a lucky star for you. Can you pick it out? If you can, mark the different star and send the circle to me at once along with your name and address. A prompt answer can start you on the way to win the great $2000.00 free prize.

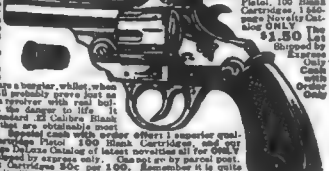


BE PROMPT—WIN $650.00 EXTRA

Someone like you who will write me at once can get $650.00 cash just for being prompt, so you may thank your lucky stars if you send your answer right off. No risk. Nothing to buy. Nothing hard to do. Over $7000.00 in valuable prizes will be given free of cost. Send today and I will show you just how you can get your free choice of these splendid new sedans or $2000.00 cash, without cost or obligation of any kind. All we plan! A record for everybody! SEND NO MONEY. Answer AT ONCE.

Address GEO. WILSON, DEPT. 54, AUGUSTA, MAINE

BLANK CARTRIDGE PISTOL



Special Offer 1 Blank Cartridge Pistol, 100 Blank Cartridges, 1 Master Novelty Catalog ONLY $1.50 The Lot Shipped by Express Only. Cash with Order Today

Powerful Cartridge Pistol 100 Blank Cartridges, and our Big Complete Catalog of latest novelties all for ONLY $1.50. Shipped by express only. Can not go by parcel post. Blank Cartridges 50c per 100. Remember it is quite unlawful to use blank cartridges to frighten burglars, as it will not accommodate loaded cartridges. Special Offer Catalog only 10c. No C. O. D. Shipments.
Dept. 314, Racine, Wisconsin

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

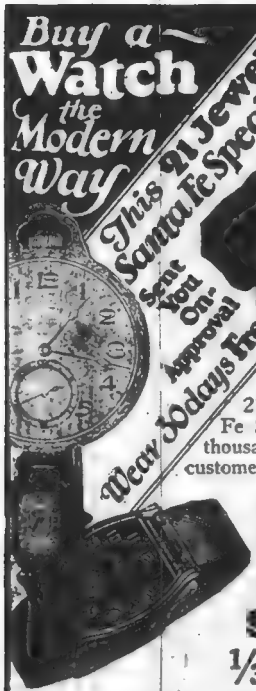
EARN UP TO $250 Per Month, Plus Expenses

Active men—19 to 50—needed in this profitable, permanent, pleasant profession. Travel or remain near home. Excellent opportunities—promotion rapid. Meet high railway officials. We assist you to a position paying $110 per month, plus expenses, upon completion of few weeks' spare time home instruction or refund your tuition. Experience brings rapid advances to $175, $200, $250 per month. Our free booklet shows how to make your future a certainty. Write for it today.

Standard Business Training Inst.
Division 13 BUFFALO, N.

Buy a Watch the Modern Way

This 21 Jewel Santa Fe Special Sent You On Approval Wear 30 days Free!



Thank you for making it possible for me to own a 21-jewel Santa Fe Special, write thousands of our customers.

Buy Direct

Our catalogue is our showroom. Any watch will be sent for you to see without one penny down. No obligation to buy.

Save 1/3 to 1/2

on the price you pay for a similar watch made by other Manufacturers. Most liberal offer. Our "Direct to You" offer and Extra Special Distribution Plan is fully explained in the New Santa Fe Special Booklet just off the press. The "Santa Fe Special" Plan means a big saving of money to you and you get the best watch value on the market today.

Railroad Accuracy
Beauty Unsurpassed
Life-long Dependability

—all are combined in the highest degree in the famous "Santa Fe Special" Watch.

These watches are now in service on practically every railroad in the United States and in every branch of the Army and Naval service. Thousands of them are distributed around the world. You will never miss the few cents a day that will make you own one of these watches.

Just Out! Send coupon for our New Watch Book—just off the press. All the newest watch case designs in white or green gold, fancy shapes and thin models are shown. Read our easy payment offer. Wear the watch 30 days FREE.

SANTA FE WATCH CO.
Dept. 355 Thomas Bldg. Topeka, Kans.

SANTA FE WATCH CO., Dept. 355, Thomas Bldg. Topeka, Kansas.

Please send me absolutely Free your New Watch Book ☐ Diamond Book ☐.

Name _____

Address _____ State _____

AN OPPORTUNITY TO EASILY

Earn $100 a Week Profits in Advance

Sell Gibson extra fine men's made-to-order all-wool suits at $23.50 and $31.50, direct to wearer. Biggest values—Most liberal commissions, with bonus, to producers. Frequent opportunities to get own clothes at no cost. We deliver and collect. 6x9 cloth samples — over 100 styles — complete outfit in handsome carrying case furnished FREE to ambitious men who are willing to hustle. Write today.

W. Z. GIBSON, Inc.
500 S. Throop St. Dept. Q-504 Chicago

Radium Is Restoring Health to Thousands

No medicine, drugs or dieting. Just a light, small, comfortable, inexpensive Radio-Active Pad, worn on the back by day and over the stomach at night. Sold on trial. You can be sure it is helping you before you buy it. Over 150,000 sold on this plan. Thousands have written us that healed them of Neuritis, Rheumatism, High Blood Pressure, Constipation, Nervous Prostration, Heart, Lungs, Liver, Kidney and Bladder trouble, etc. No matter what you have tried, or what your trouble may be, try Degnen's Radio-Active Solar Pad at our risk. Write today for Trial offer and descriptive literature. Radium Appliance Co., 104 Bradbury Bldg., Los Angeles, Cal.

FRENCH LOVE DROPS

An entrancing exotic perfume of irresistible charm, clinging for hours lovers loath to part. Just a few drops are enough. Full size bottle 90c. prepaid or $1.35 C. O. D. plus postage. Directions with every order. FREE: 1 full size bottle if you order 2 vials. **D'ORO CO.** Box 90, Varick Station, New York Dept. NSG 3

PATENTS

Time counts in applying for patents. Don't risk delay in protecting your ideas. Send sketch or model for instructions or write for FREE book, "How to Obtain a Patent" and "Record of Invention" form. No charge for information on how to proceed. Communications strictly confidential. Prompt, careful, efficient service. Clarence A. O'Brien, Registered Patent Attorney, 1877, Security Savings and Comm'l Bank Building (directly across street from Patent Office) Washington, D. C.

TOBACCO Habit Overcome Or No Pay

Over 500,000 men and women used Superba Remedy to help stop Cigarettes, Cigars, Pipe, Chewing or Snuff. Write for full treatment on trial. Contains no dope or habit forming drugs. Costs $2.00 if successful, nothing if not. SUPERBA CO., A-33, Baltimore, Md.

AVIATION Information FREE

Send us your name and address for full information regarding the Aviation and Airplane business. Find out about the many great opportunities now open and how we prepare you at home, during spare time, to qualify. Our new book *Opportunities in the Airplane Industry* also sent free if you answer at once.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF AVIATION
Dept. 1183 3501 Michigan Ave. CHICAGO

FREE!

Body Chart

If you will mail the coupon below, this Anatomical and Physiological Chart will be mailed to you without one cent of expense. It shows the location of the Organs, Bones of the Body, Muscles of the Body, Head and Vertebra Column and tells you how the nerves radiate from your spinal cord to all organs of the body. This chart should be in every home.

Where Is That PAIN?

It may be in the neck, back, hips, stomach, liver, lungs or anus. Wherever it is, the chart will help to show you the location and cause of your ailment. For instance, this chart will help you locate appendicitis pain. Hundreds of lives have been saved if people had known the location and character of the pain and had received proper attention.

Stop that Pain

By Relieving the Cause with

Violet Ray — Vibration
Ozone — Medical Electricity

The Four Greatest Curative Powers Generated by This

Great New Invention!

Elco Health Generators at last are ready for you! If you want more health—greater power to enjoy the pleasures and delights about you, or if more beauty is your desire—*write!* Ask for the book on these inventions which has just been prepared. It will be sent to you without cost. It tells you how Elco Health Generators aid you in leaving the lethargy and hopelessness of bad health and weakness behind forever. Re-vitalize your body. Bring back energy. Be wholly alive. Write today!

Here's What Elco Users Say—

"Wouldn't take $1000 for my Elco." "Has made me feel years younger." "Cured my Rheumatism." "Cured my stomach trouble." "Cured my kidneys." "Cured my constipation." "Cured my backache." "Cured my eyes." "Cured my weak nerves." "Cured my catarrh." "Cured my deafness." "Cured my headache." "Feel strong again." "Thanks to Elco." "Elco is wonderful." "Feel like a new man." "Feels never bother me." "Cured my blood." "Cured my rheumatism." "Elco never bothered me." "Cured my nerves." "Cured my eyes." "Cured my backache." "Cured my kidneys." "Cured my constipation." "Cured my deafness." "Cured my headache." "Cured my stomach trouble." "Cured my rheumatism." "Cured my blood." "Cured my nerves." "Cured my catarrh

Win $3,500.00

Prizes from $1600.00 to $4343.00 each have been won through our unique advertising plan. In our last, an old man of 69, out of work, won over $5000.00. A boy, only 15, won $900.00. In next 3 or 4 months thousands of dollars will be awarded to fortunate persons who solve our puzzles and win our prizes.

FIND THE TWIN FLYERS

Watch out! These twelve pictures of a famous woman flyer all look alike—BUT—two, and only two, are exactly alike. Find these twin flyers! Some pictures are different in the collar, helmet, goggles, or tie. Remember, only two of the twelve are exactly alike. Find them, and send the numbers of the twin flyers on a post card or letter today. If correct, your answer will qualify you for this opportunity.

$7100.00 IN PRIZES GIVEN THIS TIME

Over 25 prizes, and duplicate prizes in case of ties. It's up to the winner whether he or she chooses $2375.00 in cash or a new Waco airplane, a big automobile, or a new home. A gorgeous prize list! ANYONE WHO ANSWERS THIS PUZZLE CORRECTLY MAY RECEIVE PRIZES OR CASH.

$625.00 ADDITIONAL FOR PROMPTNESS

Be prompt! It pays. Find the real twin flyers, and I will send Certificate which will be good for $625.00 if you are prompt and win first prize. Imagine, a first prize of $3500.00!

NO MORE PUZZLES TO SOLVE. Any man, woman, boy, or girl in the U. S. A., anyone at all, except residents of Chicago, Illinois, and former prize winners, 85 of the people who take up this offer are going to win these wonderful prizes. Be one of them. Send the numbers of the twin flyers. Send no money, but be prompt.

J. D. SNYDER, Dept. 242, 64 W. Illinois St., Chicago, Ill.

Play the Hawaiian Guitar like the Hawaiians!

Only 4 Motions used in playing this fascinating instrument. Our native Hawaiian instructors teach you to master them quickly. Pictures show how. Everything explained clearly.

Play in Half Hour

After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge necessary.

Easy Lessons

Even if you don't know one note from another, the 52 printed lessons and clear pictures make it easy to learn quickly. Pay as you play, when you enroll

GIVEN —a sweet toned HAWAIIAN GUITAR, Carrying Case and Playing Outfit—Value $18 to $30

No extra—everything included

WRITE AT ONCE for attractive offer and easy terms. You have everything to gain. A postcard will do. ACT!

OTHER COURSES] Tenor Banjo, Violin, Tiple, Tenor Guitar, Ukulele, Mandolin Ukulele. Under same personal instruction.

FIRST HAWAIIAN CONSERVATORY of MUSIC, Inc.
9th Floor, Woolworth Bldg., Dept. 289 New York, N. Y.
Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York—Member National Home Study Council

On your feet— In a good Paying Business

We start you in the shoe and hosiery business. Inexperienced workers earn Big Money yearly. Direct-to-Wearer plan. Just show Tanners Famous Line of Footwear.

We tell how and where to sell. Perfect fit through Patented System. Collect your pay daily. We furnish $40.00 Sample Outfit of actual shoes and hosiery. 83 styles.

Send for free book "Getting Ahead" and full particulars. No obligation.

TANNERS SHOE CO.
893 C Street, Boston, Mass.

NEW AND SIMPLE DISCOVERY

CLEARS-THE-SKIN

We prove it to you FREE. SEND NO MONEY. Write today for PROOF and full details of our liberal prepaid FULL SIZE TRIAL PACKAGE.

GUARANTEED FOR ALL SKIN TROUBLES

Quickly ends Pimples, Blackheads, Whiteheads, Coarse Pores, Wrinkles, Oily Skin, Freckles, Chronic Eczema, Stubborn Psoriasis, Scales, Crusts, Pustules Barbers Itch, Itching Skin, Scabbies, softens and whitens the skin. Just send us your name and address.

ANDRE & CO., 751 E. 42nd St., Suite 78, Chicago

SELL ROSECLIFF SHIRTS Make Steady Money

Showing Samples Men's Shirts Ties, Underwear brings you big cash commissions. One Year Guarantee. No substitutions. Free silk initials. More exclusive Rosecliff features establish leadership. Write for your FREE Outfit NOW!

YOUR OWN SHIRTS and TIES

ROSECLIFF SHIRT CORP.
Dept. J-3
1237 Broadway, N. Y.

Outfit Free

CORRECT Your NOSE!

Thousands have used the Anita Nose Adjuster to improve their appearance. Shapes flesh and cartilage of the nose—safely, painlessly, while you sleep. Results are lasting. Doctors approve it. Money back guarantee. Gold Medal winner. Write for 30-Day TRIAL OFFER and FREE BOOKLET.

ANITA INSTITUTE, 382 Anita Building, Newark, N. J.

Denison's Plays

54 Years of Hits

We supply all entertainment needs for dramatic clubs, schools, lodges, etc., and for every occasion.

Send's Minstrels Musical Comedies Revues Vaudeville Acts Blackface Skits

Catalog Free

T. S. Denison & Co., 623 S. Wabash, Dept. 139 Chicago

$351.00 CLEARED IN ONE DAY

writes W. H. Adams of Ohio. Letter from California man reports $11275 sales in three months; New Jersey $4000 profits in two months; Pa. $3000 profits in four months. Ira Shook $365 sales in one day. Bram bought one outfit April 5 and 7 more by August. Iwata bought one outfit and 19 more within a year. J. R. Burt says "only thing I ever bought that equaled advertisement." John Culp says: "Everything going lovely. Crispette wrappers all over town. It's a good old world after all." Kellog, $700 ahead end of 22 week. Wholesale or retail. Big profits either way. No town too small. Business is pleasant, fascinating and dignified. You manufacture a food product.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS

Furnish secret formulas, raw material and equipment. Little capital required; no experience needed.

Build a Business of Your Own

Be first to the sale of Crispettes. Everybody likes them. It's a delicious food confection. Write for facts about a business that will make you independent. Start now, in your own town.

PROFITS $1000 MONTH EASILY POSSIBLE

Send postal for illustrated book of facts. It contains enthusiastic letters from others—shows their places of business, tells how and when to start, and all information needed. Free. Write now!

LONG-EAKINS COMPANY
20 High Street Springfield, Ohio

A Fight Against Rupture

ATTENTION vs. NEGLECT

Everyone should realize the seriousness of Rupture, even where the protrusion is small. The Brooks Appliance is the finest kind of mechanical support for reducible rupture that it is possible to build. Hard pads and stiff springs are entirely eliminated. Our Automatic Air Cushion, light, cool and absolutely sanitary, is protected by patents in the United States and all important foreign countries.

Your name and address pinned to this advertisement will bring complete details of our free trial plan in plain sealed envelope. No need to write a letter.

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO. 173-B State St., MARSHALL, MICH

GOV'T POSITIONS

$35 TO $75 WEEKLY

MEN WOMEN AGE 18 TO 55

( ) Ry. Mail Clerk	( ) Stenog-Typist
( ) P. O. Laborer	( ) Immigration Inspector
( ) R. F. D. Carrier	( ) Seamstress
( ) Special Agent (Customs Exam.)	( ) Auditor
( ) City Mail Carrier	( ) Steno-Secretary
( ) Meat Inspector	( ) U. S. Border Patrol
( ) P. O. Clerk	( ) Chauffeur-Carrier
( ) File Clerk	( ) Watchman
( ) General Clerk	( ) Skilled Laborer
( ) Matron	( ) Postmaster
	( ) Typist

INSTRUCTION BUREAU, 118-B, St. Louis, Mo. Send me FREE particulars how to qualify for positions marked "X". Salaries, locations, opportunities, etc. ALL SENT FREE.

Name .....

Address .....

Amazing growth of Radio is opening hundreds of fine jobs every year

Paying $50, $60 and $75 a Week.

Get one of the many fine jobs for yourself that are opening every year in broadcasting stations, Radio factories, with dealers, jobbers, on board ship which gives you world-wide travel, a good salary and expenses paid, commercial land stations and other branches of Radio. Why stick to a no-future job when Radio pays its well-trained men $50, $60, $75 and even as high as $200 a week.

Many N. R. I. Men Make $10 to $25 a Week Extra Almost at once

My book, "Rich Rewards in Radio," points out the money-making opportunities in Radio and explains how I show my men to begin making good money in their spare time, right in their neighborhood, almost at once. G. W. Page, 107 Raleigh Apts., Nashville, Tenn., made $925 in his spare time while taking my course. I'll show you how to make good money, too.

I Will Train You at Home in Your Spare Time

Keep your job. I have trained hundreds of men and young men at home in their spare time—have doubled and tripled their salaries. High School or college education is not necessary. My Money-Back Agreement protects you fully.

Get My New 64-page Book Free

It points out where the good jobs are, what they pay, how to get one. A copy of my Money-Back Agreement comes with it. My unlimited Employment Service to Graduates, Eight Outfits of Radio Parts for a home experimental Radio laboratory and many other features are explained in it. It is free to anyone who wants to make more money.

J. E. SMITH, President
NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE
Dept. OCM Washington, D. C.

Clip and mail this coupon at once

J. E. Smith, Pres.,
National Radio Institute, Dept. OCM,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send your book, "Rich Rewards in Radio."

Name .....

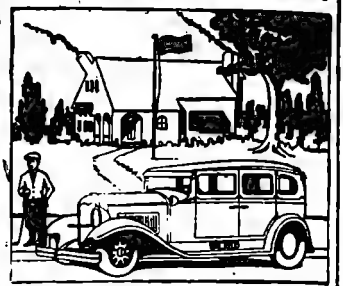
Address .....

City..... State.....

What's Wrong With This Picture?

See If You Can Find the Mistakes in This Picture

We will spend over $167,000.00 this year for the purpose of conducting free prize offers to advertise and expand our business. Thousands of persons are going to receive valuable prizes or cash awards and compensations this year through our offers. The sky is the limit! Anyone living in the United States outside of Chicago, except employees of this company, members of their families, or our previous auto or first prize winners, or members of their families, may enter an answer to this puzzle.



$7,346 in Prizes Given in This One Offer

Seven Big New 6-Cylinder Sedans and Other Valuable Prizes

Try your skill—it costs you nothing. Study the picture shown here, but look carefully. The artist has purposely made many mistakes. Can you find four or more of them? These mistakes can be found in various objects in the picture—that's all the hint we can give you. If you think you can find four or more mistakes, answer at once. Just mark the mistakes in pencil on the picture, or tell me what they are in a letter or on a post card. Only four mistakes are required for a perfect answer.

Anyone Who Answers This Puzzle Correctly May Receive Prizes or Cash!

Man, woman, boy, or girl—it doesn't matter who or what you are. Seven of the people who take up this offer are going to win wonderful automobiles. You can be among them. Answer today! Duplicate prizes awarded in case of ties.

Additional $500.00 for Promptness are prompt. If your answer is judged to be perfect, I will tell $500.00 extra will be awarded in addition to first prize if you you without delay about winning the prizes. Hurry now! Address your answer to O. W. ALDERTON, Advertising Manager, Dept. 374 810 North Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Photos ENLARGED

Size 16x20 inches. Same price for full length or bust form, groups, children, pets or enlargements of any part of group picture. Safe return of original photo guaranteed.

SEND NO MONEY Just mail photo or snapshot (any size) and within a week you will receive your beautiful life-like enlargement also 16x20 in. guaranteed fadeless. Pay postman 98c plus postage or send $1.60 with order and we pay postage. **SPECIAL** While this introductory offer is on we will include **FREE OFFER** a hand-colored miniature reproduction of photo sent. Take advantage now of this unusual offer. Write today.

98c

UNITED PORTRAIT COMPANY
1000 West Lake St. Dept. C-800, Chicago, Ill.

MORE PAY

FREE SHIRTS TIES CASH BONUS GIVEN

QUAKER FREE OUTFIT

Earn big money right from the start. Let Quaker help you. Wonderful free Sample outfit gets orders everywhere. Men's Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery. Unmatchable values. Unique selling features. Ironclad guarantee. You can't fail with Quaker. Write for your Free outfit NOW.

QUAKER SHIRT CORPORATION
Dept. H-3 1107 Broadway, N. Y.

Ride Self of ASTHMA

If Asthma is slowly tearing down your health and sleep is impossible, I want you to try free a treatment that saved me from a life of torture and agony, after everything else, even Doctors, failed to help me. This treatment performed a miracle in my case. All choking and wheezing stopped and within 24 hours I could lie down and sleep in comfort all night long. It is really astonishing how quickly I got well and I have not had an attack since. Recovery was so complete I had no trouble in getting my life insured. No trace of Asthma was found. I will prove this by a sworn affidavit from the Doctor who examined me. If your condition is no different than mine was, this treatment should give you complete relief as it did me. If what you are taking gives you only temporary relief, write me today for a free trial size and proof that I was cured of Asthma after suffering 6 years. Please enclose 10c to help pay postage and packing. There is no other charge. Write today for a free trial. O. W. Dean, 2674 Dean Bldg., Benton Harbor, Mich.

PAINT SIGNS & SHOW CARDS

We quickly teach you by mail, or at our school. Practical methods. Modern system. Diploma granted. Free Employment Service. Over 1000 students secured positions. Many earning $40 to $100 weekly. Only 90 days required. Many earning while learning. Big illustrated book free. Write for catalog and information.

DETROIT SCHOOL OF LETTERING
160 Stimson Ave. Est. 1899 DETROIT, MICH.

CASH MONEY and Plenty of It!

EDISCO Men's Wear

We offer you absolutely FREE a real opportunity for regular and complete cash! This big money-making plan has made many Edisco users rich. Take orders for the fashionable famous EDISCO Suits and guaranteed cloth samples. Big values, easy sales and repeat orders prompt. Every sale means big profits.

Act Now! Write Us Today!

The EDISCO line is ready for the asking. We send you Finest Cloth samples of Edisco Suits and SAMPLE-CLOTH SHIRTS. Act now! Just put your name and address on the coupon for Edisco line. Write!

FREE! Sales Outfit

EDISCO MEN'S WEAR CO., Dept. 12
1215 W. Van Buren St. Chicago, Ill.

PANTS MATCHED TO ANY SUIT—FREE SAMPLES

DON'T DISCARD YOUR OLD SUIT. Wear the coat and vest another year by getting new trousers to match. Send piece of cloth from inside leg of your pants. Give your age, and pattern of striped flannel. From our vast stock of suiting we will submit FREE samples and measuring chart.

AMERICAN MATCH PANTS CO.
Dept. E. H. 6 W. Randolph St., Chicago, Ill.

COPPER CANS

For Gasoline, Preserving, General Home Use. Reduces danger of storing Gasoline in or near barn. Thousands of other uses. Absolutely Air-tight. Heavy Copper throughout, no solder inside.

Postage and Insurance Extra.
Deposit required on all C.O.D. orders.
Prices on larger and special made Cans and Boilers by Request.
CATALOG FREE

FARMERS SUPPLY CO.
603-E Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pa.

Clear-Tone Clears the Skin

Clear-Tone is a penetrating, purifying lotion, used at night with astounding success to clear the skin of pimples, blotches, black-heads and other annoying, unsightly skin irritations due to external causes. Many thousands in the last 12 years have found relief by the use of Clear-Tone. "Complexion Tragedies with Happy Endings", filled with facts supplied by Clear-Tone users sent Free on request. Clear-Tone can be had at your druggist—or direct from us. GIVENS CHEMICAL CO., 2557 Southwest Boulevard, Kansas City, Mo.

LEARN TO PLAY

VIOLIN, TENOR BANJO, HAWAIIAN GUITAR, BANJO, CORNET, GUITAR, MANDOLIN, BANJO MANDOLIN, BANJO-GUITAR, SNARE DRUM, FIELD DRUM, PIANO or ORGAN quickly by note by our copyrighted easy to learn home-study method. No teacher or talent necessary. Lessons are so simplified and so easily mastered many pupils play by note after only 10 lessons. Thousands of men, women, boys and girls have learned to play quickly and proficiently by our system of teaching. Cost is less than 3c a day. Pay while you learn. Your opportunity to become popular and pay for credit or pleasure. Write for Free Trial. Any instrument except PIANO and ORGAN furnished if desired at wholesale price.

CHICAGO CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, INC.
1601 No. Halsted St., Dept.-42. Chicago, Ill.

Be A Detective

Make Secret Investigations

Earn Big Money. Work home or travel. Fascinating work. Experience unnecessary.

DETECTIVE Particulars FREE, Write NOW to

GEO. N. WAGNER, 2190 Broadway, New York

SONG WRITERS!

SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCE ROYALTIES are paid on work found acceptable for publication. Anyone wishing to write *either the words or music* for songs may submit work for free examination and advice. *Past experience unnecessary.* New demand created by "Talking Pictures" fully described in our free book. Write for it Today. NEWCOMER ASSOCIATES
723 Earle Building, New York

Quit Tobacco

Don't try to banish cravings for the evil tobacco habit upon your own resources of will-power. Let nature have her way, while the aid of the Keeley Treatment lessens the desire to quit.

KEELEY TREATMENT FOR TOBACCO HABIT Quickly banishes craving for tobacco. Successful for over 40 years. Write today for FREE BOOK and our MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.

KEELEY INSTITUTE, Dept. I-212, Dwight, Illinois

MEN—BIG PROFIT!

Direct from Paris. 400% to 800% Profit. Exquisite pictures. Lifelike, lovely colors. Ready to frame. Also postcards. Great Masters. Artistic Models. Religious, etc. 2,500 different subjects. No talking- just show the samples! Homes, stores, offices, factories, farms—prospects everywhere! Order 15c. to $20. No competition. Pockets hold day's needs. Beautiful samples $1. (stamps, cash or money order.) Terms free.

EDUCATOR PRESS (Exclusive Importers)
19 Park Row, New York, Dept. L-41

Buchstein's Fibre Limb

is nothing to your stump—strong, cool, neat. Light. Guaranteed 5 years. Easy payments.

SEND FOR CATALOG TODAY

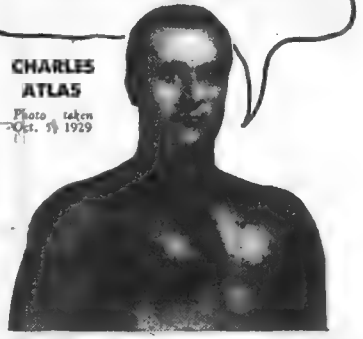
Also fibre arms, and braces for all deformities.

B. S. BUCHSTEIN CO., 610 3rd AVE., SO., MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

Skinny, flat-chested, 'cry-baby' muscles

--yet this secret made me the

"WORLD'S MOST PERFECTLY DEVELOPED MAN!"



CHARLES ATLAS

Photo taken Oct. 7th 1929

WOULD you believe, looking at my new photo, that I was once a weakling—a poor skinny, run-down, half-alive "runt," always ailing, couldn't run 25 yards without puffing and wheezing, had arms and legs "like pipe stems," and a build that made people feel like laughing?

That's what I was before I discovered the secret of Dynamic-Tension that rebuilt my body and made a new man of me—and won for me the title "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

And now I offer to reveal my amazing secret to you and give you the self-same methods—to rebuild YOUR body—to increase YOUR measurements—to give YOU the same kind of big, powerful muscles—to show YOU the quick, sure way to double your energy and overcome the weak spots in your system that bring on constipation, frequent colds, headaches, dizzy spells, poor blood condition, and even such things as timidity and weak will power.

I've put my story, and the stories of scores of others, young and old, who have used my secret of Dynamic-Tension, in a 48-page handsomely illustrated book called "*Everlasting Health and Strength.*" I'll send you a copy absolutely free upon receipt of the coupon printed below, giving me your name and address.

If, standing before your mirror, stripped to your birthday suit, you can't honestly say "YES" to the question, "*Am I PROUD of this body of mine?*"—then you can't afford to wait another minute before writing for a free copy of my valuable book. With the book I'll send you a letter showing how you don't risk a penny to become this *new man*—everything is at my expense if you don't get the results promised to you.

Start right now to be the NEW MAN that I promise you can be—don't put off—mail the coupon—I'm waiting to help you!

CHARLES ATLAS (Dept. 93), 171 Madison Avenue, N. Y. C.

CHARLES ATLAS (Dept. 93), 171 Madison Avenue, N. Y. C.

I want the proof that your system of Dynamic-Tension will make a *New Man* of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Here's Money to Pay Your Grocery Bills

AN AMAZING CHANCE TO MAKE

$15 A DAY

If you want plenty of money to pay your grocery bills and meet other expenses—if you want a wonderful chance to make $10 to $15 a day—just send me your name and I'll show you a new, pleasant way to get it. With grocery bills all paid and money jingling in your pocket you won't have to take off your hat to anybody. L. C. Van Allen, of Illinois, found that out when he cleared $125 in a single week. John Tyler, of Penn., followed my plan and made $30 to $35 a day. Mrs. B. L. Hodges, of New York, says she never fails to make $18 to $20 a day. Of course some make more than others. But these big earnings of a few of my Representatives show the wonderful opportunities.

Big Profits for Pleasant Work

We are an old-established, million-dollar Company. We distribute Groceries and other Household Necessities direct from factory to user through Authorized Local Representatives. We have thousands of customers in every state. Last year they bought fifteen million packages of our products. This put nearly two-million dollars in the pockets of our Representatives. Now I ignite you to share in these enormous profits.

No Capital or Experience Needed

You positively don't need any capital, training or experience. Your own home will be your headquarters. You set your own hours—work as you please. All you do is call on your friends and our established customers and take care of their orders. Keep your present job and start in spare time if you want to. Oscar Stuart, of W. Virginia, reports profits of $18 for 2½ hours of spare-time work. This shows the remarkable possibilities.

Send No Money

If you want plenty of cash to pay your bills—if you want a wonderful chance to make $10 to $15 a day—send me your name at once. I will give you full details of my amazing new plan without cost or obligation. I'll give you the big opportunity you've long been waiting for. So don't lose a moment. Mail the coupon NOW!

FREE!
NEW FORD
Tudor Sedan

NOT a contest. I offer a brand-new car free to producers as an extra reward or bonus—in addition to their large cash profits. Mail coupon for particulars.

MAIL THIS NOW!

ALBERT MILLS, Pres., American Products Co.,
8499 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Send me, without cost or obligation, all the facts about your new proposition that offers a chance to make $10 to $15 a day. Also explain your FREE Ford Offer.

Name .....

Address .....

(Use pencil or write plainly)

GET ON Uncle Sam's PAYROLL

$1260 to $3400 Year

Men—Women 18 to 50

Steady Work
Paid Vacations
Common Education Usually Sufficient

Mail coupon today—SURE

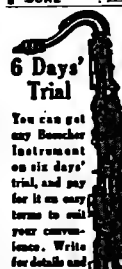
FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. F-266
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Rush to me, entirely free of charge, 32-page book with: (1) List of positions and description of the position checked below; (2) Particulars telling me how to get a Government Job.

- Railway Postal Clerk ... ($1900 to
- Postoffice Clerk ... ($1700 to
- City Mail Carrier ... ($1700 to
- Rural Mail Carrier ... ($2100 to
- Inspector of Customs ... ($2100 to

Name .....

COUPON



Easy to Play to Pay

6 Days' Trial

Only a Buescher

You can get any Buescher Instrument on six days' trial, and pay for it on easy terms to suit your convenience. Write for details and free literature.

Saxophone gives you these extra features—Snap-on Pads, greatest improvement, easy to replace, no cementing—Patented Automatic Octave Key, patent Recile Accuracy, convenient ring arrangement.

Be Popular Socially Earn Extra Money

playing a sweet-toned Buescher. Many rings, one hour each—will astonish and please you. It's easy with a Buescher. Tell us what instrument you are interested in. We'll do the rest.

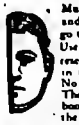
Buescher Band Instrument Co.
3425 Buescher Block Elkhart, Indiana

MONEY FOR YOU

Men or women can earn $15 to $25 weekly in spare time at home making display cards. Light, pleasant work. No canvassing. We instruct you and supply you with work. Write to-day for full particulars.

The MENHENITT COMPANY Limited
845 Dominion Bldg., Toronto, Can.

DEAFNESS IS MISERY



Multitudes of persons with defective hearing and Head Noises enjoy conversation, go to Theatre and Church because they Use Leonard Invisible Ear Drums which resemble Tiny Megaphones fitting in the Ear entirely out of sight. No wires, batteries or head piece. They are inexpensive. Write for booklet and sworn statement of the inventor who was himself deaf.

A. O. LEONARD, Inc., Suite 823, 70 5th Ave., New York

STOP Tobacco

No human being can escape the harmful effects of tobacco. Don't try to quit without assistance. Let our simple inoffensive remedy help you. A complete treatment costs but $2.00. Money promptly refunded if you do not get desired results.

Ours is a harmless preparation, carefully compounded to overcome the condition, that will make quitting of tobacco pleasant and easy. It comes with a money back guarantee.

Anti-Tobacco League P. O. Box N-3 OMAHA, NEBR.

$3750.00 REWARD

CAN YOU FIND THE KEY TO THIS PRIZE BAG OF GOLD?

There are 20 keys pictured below. To be sure, they all look alike BUT, examine them closely. 19 of them are exactly alike but **"ONE"** and only one is DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHERS. It is the key to OPEN THE PADLOCK on this $3750.00 prize bag of gold. SEE IF YOU CAN FIND IT. Hurry! Win this $3750.00. A number of new 6-cylinder 4-door sedans and cash prizes too will be given. This offer is open to all and it costs nothing to try.

THESE CLUES WILL HELP YOU TO FIND THE DIFFERENT KEY!

The difference may be in the size, the shape, or even in the notches. So, STUDY EACH KEY CAREFULLY and if you find the **"ONE"** key that is different from all the others, SEND THE NUMBER OF IT with your name and address TO ME AT ONCE on a post card or in a letter. You may become the winner of a $2,000.00 Special Buick Sedan and $1750.00 cash extra, or $3750.00 all in cash—without one cent of cost to you.

$1750.00 CASH—EXTRA FOR PROMPTNESS!

Absolutely, I will pay $1750.00 cash extra to the first prize winner just for promptness. In the event of a tie for any of the prizes offered, the full amount of the prize tied for will be awarded to each tying contestant. Hurry!—write the number of the **"ONE"** key that is different from all the others and your name and address on a post card or a letter and MAIL IT TODAY—sure. Win that $3750.00! As soon as I get your reply, I'll tell you how you can get this wonderful prize of $3750.00 cash without any obligation or one penny of cost to you.

G. FORD, Dep't. 228, 537 South Dearborn Street, CHICAGO, ILL.

RUPTURE IS NOT A TEAR

Your physician will tell you that hernia (rupture) is a muscular weakness in the abdominal wall.—Do not be satisfied with merely bracing these weakened muscles, with your condition probably growing worse every day!—Strike at the real cause of the trouble, and

THEN—

The weakened muscles recover their strength and elasticity, and—

The unsightly, unnatural protrusion disappears, and—

You recover your vim, vigor and vitality,—your strength and energy,—and you look and feel better in every way,—and your friends notice the difference,—

THEN—

You'll know your rupture is gone, and

You'll know why for almost a quarter of a century numerous sworn statements report complete recovery and freedom from uncomfortable mechanical supports, without delay from work.

SEND NO MONEY

A Test of the scientific self-treatment mentioned in coupon below is now available to you, whether you are young or old, man or woman. It costs you nothing to make this test.—For your own good mail the coupon NOW—TODAY.

FREE TEST COUPON

Pilopay Laboratories, 692 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Send me a Free 10-day test supply of the remedial factor Pilopay and 48-page illustrated book on Rupture; no charge for this now or later.

Name .....

Address .....

Follow This Man

Secret Service Operator No. 38 is on the Job!

FOLLOW him through all the excitement of his chase of the counterfeit gang. See how a crafty operator works. Tell-tale finger prints on the lamp stand in the murdered girl's room! The detective's cigarette case is handled by the unsuspecting gangster, and a great mystery is solved. Better than fiction. It's true, every word of it. No-obligation.

FREE The Confidential Reports No. 38 Made to His Chief

And the best part of it all is this. It may open your eyes to the great future for YOU as a highly paid Finger Print Expert. More men are needed right now. This school has taken men just like you and trained them for high official positions. This is the kind of work you would like. Days full of excitement. Big salaries. Rewards.

WRITE and I'll send the Free Reports—also a wonderful illustrated book telling of the future awaiting you as a Finger Print Expert.

Institute of Applied Science
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 15-63 Chicago, Ill.

The Man I Pity Most

POOR OLD JONES. No one had any use for him. No one respected him. Across his face I read one harsh word—FAILURE. He just lived on. A poor worn out imitation of a man, doing his sorry best to get on in the world. If he had realized just one thing he could have made good. He might have been a brilliant success.

There are thousands and thousands of men like Jones. They, too, could be happy, successful, respected and loved. But they can't seem to realize the one big fact—that practically everything worth while living for depends upon STRENGTH—upon live, red-blooded, he-man muscle.

Everything you do depends upon strength. No matter what your occupation, you need the health, vitality and clear thinking only big, strong, virile muscles can give you. When you are ill the strength in those big muscles pulls you through. At the office, in the farm fields, or on the tennis courts, you'll find your success generally depends upon your muscular development.

Here's a Short Cut to Strength and Success

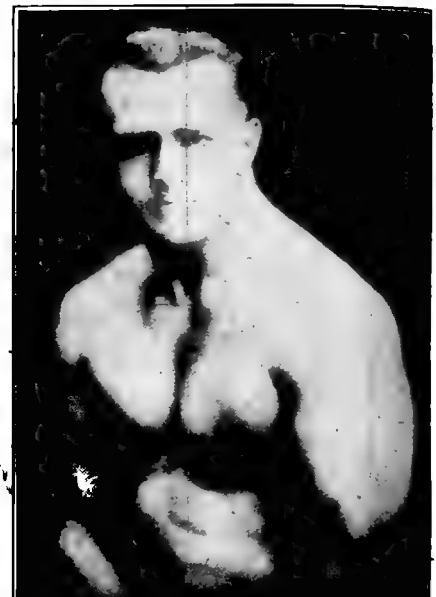
"But," you say, "it takes years to build my body up to the point where it will equal those of athletic champions." It does if you go about it without any system, but there is a scientific short cut. And that's where I come in.

30 Days is All I Need

In just 30 days I can do things with your body you never thought possible. With just a few minutes work every morning, I will add one full inch of real, live muscle to each of your arms, and two whole inches across your chest. Many of my pupils have gained more than that, but I GUARANTEE to do at least that much for you in one short month. Your neck will grow shapely, your shoulders begin to broaden. Before you know it, you'll find people turning around when you pass. Women will want to know you. Your boss will treat you with a new respect. You'll look ten years younger, and you'll feel like it, too. Work will be easy. As for play, why, you realize then that you don't know what play really means.

I Strengthen Those Inner Organs, Too

But I'm not through with you. I want ninety days in all to do the job right, and then all I ask is that you stand in front of your mirror and look yourself over. What a marvelous change! Those great square shoulders! That pair of huge, lithe arms! Those firm, shapely legs! Yes, sir. They are yours, and they are there to stay. You'll be just as fit inside as you are out, too, because I work on your heart, your lives—all of your inner organs, strengthening and exercising them. Yes indeed, life can give you a greater thrill than you ever dreamed. But, remember, the only sure road to health, strength and happiness always demands action.



EARLE LIEDERMAN, The Muscle Builder

Author of "Muscle Building," "Science of Wrestling," "Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health," "Endurance," Etc.

Send for my Big New Book "Muscular Development"

EARLE LIEDERMAN,
Dept. 1703, 305 Broadway,
New York City.

Dear Sir: Please send me, absolutely FREE and without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development."

Name ...AGE

Street

City ..... State .....

Please write or print plainly.

64 pages and .... IT IS FREE

It contains forty-eight full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness do not put it off. Send today—right now before you turn this page.

EARLE LIEDERMAN
DEPT. 1703
305 Broadway, New York City

OLD GOLD

changed the nation's smoking

HABITS

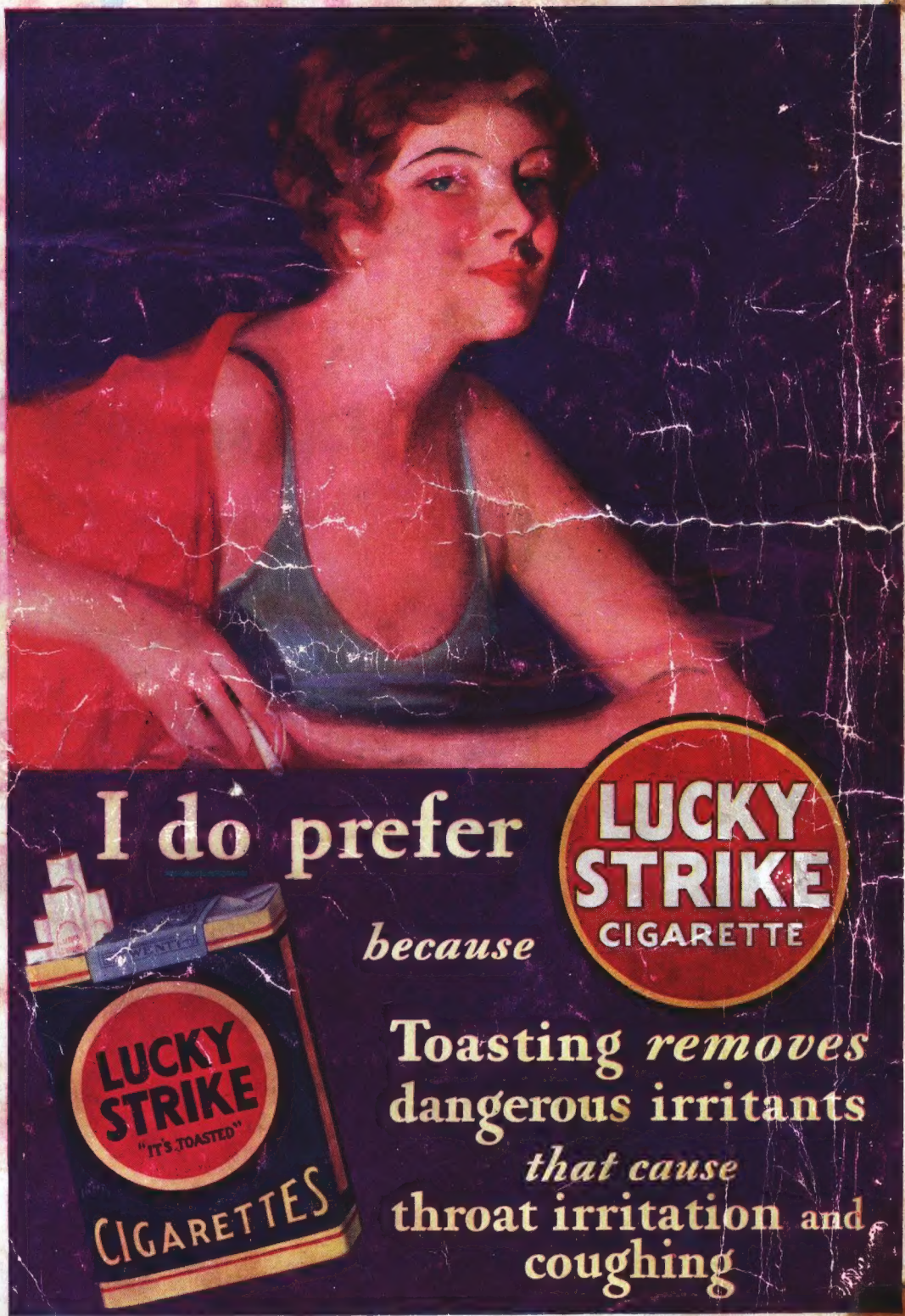
THE SMOKE SCREEN THAT KEEPS OUT THROAT-SCRATCH

© P. Lorillard Co., Est. 1760

...BECAUSE YOU *NEEDED* A COUGHLESS CIGARETTE

Play the cold season safe. This is the season when you'll especially appreciate OLD GOLD'S freedom from throat-scratch. They are gentle to your throat . . . They give you smoothness, cleanliness and wonderful flavor. OLD GOLD'S pure, specially blended tobacco soothes and pleases. Let it tell you OLD GOLD'S story—pleasure without penalty, wonderful flavor plus throat-ease. Change to OLD GOLD today. For this is OLD GOLD weather.

finer tobaccos make them smoother and better . . . with "not a cough in a carload"


I do prefer
LUCKY STRIKE CIGARETTE
because
Toasting removes dangerous irritants that cause throat irritation and coughing
LUCKY STRIKE
"IT'S TOASTED"
CIGARETTES

20¢

ASTOUNDING

STORIES OF SUPER-SCIENCE

BRIGANDS OF THE MOON

A Thrilling Interplanetary Novel of Intrigue and Adventure

By **RAY CUMMINGS**

20¢

ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER-SCIENCE

A CLAYTON MAGAZINE

BRIGANDS OF THE MOON

A Thrilling Interplanetary Novel of Intrigue and Adventure

By RAY CUMMINGS